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# **GUZ 10 2Samuel**

*Bible Commentary:  
David Guzik TEV - X*

**David Guzik**

**David Guziks' Commentary On**  
**10 2Samuel**  
**Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)**

**David Hears of Saul's Death**

**2Sa 1:1** After Saul's death David came back from his victory over the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag for two days.

2Sa 1:2 The next day a young man arrived from Saul's camp. To show his grief, he had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head. He went to David and bowed to the ground in respect.

2Sa 1:3 David asked him, "Where have you come from?" "I have escaped from the Israelite camp," he answered.

2Sa 1:4 "Tell me what happened," David said. "Our army ran away from the battle," he replied, "and many of our men were killed. Saul and his son Jonathan were also killed."

2Sa 1:5 "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?" David asked him.

2Sa 1:6 He answered, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and I saw that Saul was leaning on his spear and that the chariots and cavalry of the enemy were closing in on him.

2Sa 1:7 Then he turned around, saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Yes, sir!'

2Sa 1:8 He asked who I was, and I told him that I was an Amalekite.

2Sa 1:9 Then he said, 'Come here and kill me! I have been badly wounded, and I'm about to die.'

2Sa 1:10 So I went up to him and killed him, because I knew that he would die anyway as soon as he fell. Then I

took the crown from his head and the bracelet from his arm, and I have brought them to you, sir."

2Sa 1:11 David tore his clothes in sorrow, and all his men did the same.

2Sa 1:12 They grieved and mourned and fasted until evening for Saul and Jonathan and for Israel, the people of the LORD, because so many had been killed in battle.

2Sa 1:13 David asked the young man who had brought him the news, "Where are you from?" He answered, "I'm an Amalekite, but I live in your country."

2Sa 1:14 David asked him, "How is it that you dared kill the LORD's chosen king?"

2Sa 1:15 Then David called one of his men and said, "Kill him!" The man struck the Amalekite and mortally wounded him,

2Sa 1:16 and David said to the Amalekite, "You brought this on yourself. You condemned yourself when you confessed that you killed the one whom the LORD chose to be king."

### **David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan**

2Sa 1:17 David sang this lament for Saul and his son Jonathan,

2Sa 1:18 and ordered it to be taught to the people of Judah. (It is recorded in *The Book of Jashar*.)

2Sa 1:19 "On the hills of Israel our leaders are dead! The bravest of our soldiers have fallen!

2Sa 1:20 Do not announce it in Gath or in the streets of Ashkelon. Do not make the women of Philistia glad; do not let the daughters of pagans rejoice.

2Sa 1:21 "May no rain or dew fall on Gilboa's hills; may its fields be always barren! For the shields of the brave lie there in disgrace; the shield of Saul is no longer polished with oil.

2Sa 1:22 Jonathan's bow was deadly, the sword of Saul was merciless, striking down the mighty, killing the enemy.

2Sa 1:23 "Saul and Jonathan, so wonderful and dear; together in life, together in death; swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.

2Sa 1:24 "Women of Israel, mourn for Saul! He clothed you in rich scarlet dresses and adorned you with jewels and gold.

2Sa 1:25 "The brave soldiers have fallen, they were killed in battle. Jonathan lies dead in the hills.

2Sa 1:26 "I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan; how dear you were to me! How wonderful was your love for me, better even than the love of women.

2Sa 1:27 "The brave soldiers have fallen, their weapons abandoned and useless."

## **2 Samuel 1:1-27**

### **2 Samuel 1 - David Mourns the Death of Saul**

#### **A. David learns of Saul and Jonathan's deaths.**

*1. (1-4) David hears the news in Ziklag.*

**Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag, on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. And David said to him, "Where have you come from?" So he said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel." Then David said to him, "How did the matter go? Please tell me." And he answered, "The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also."**

a. **After the death of Saul:** King Saul and his three sons were killed in battle against the Philistines, dying on the slopes of Mount Gilboa (1Sa 31:1-8). It was the sad ending of a tragic life, concluding the story of a man who came to the throne humble but left it hardened, bitter against both God and man.

b. **When David returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites:** Towards the end of 1 Samuel, despairing David left the people of God and allied himself with the Philistines. God prevented a complete alliance and brought David back through heartbreaking circumstances (the **Amalekites** stole the families and possessions of David and his men). Strengthening himself in God (1Sa 30:6), David defeated the **Amalekites** and brought back everyone and everything.

i. Though David still lived among the Philistines, he was a changed man since his heartbreaking circumstances and since strengthening himself in the LORD.

ii. When David came back triumphantly to Ziklag, he knew a battle between the Philistines and the Israelites just ended. He certainly was concerned about the outcome of that battle.

c. **A man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head:** David knew this was bad news because the messenger had the traditional expressions of mourning for the dead - **clothes torn and dust on his head**. Therefore, he immediately reacted with humble mourning

2. (5-10) *The Amalekite's story.*

**So David said to the young man who told him, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?" Then the young man who told him said, "As I**

happened by chance *to be* on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, 'Here I am.' And he said to me, 'Who *are* you?' So I answered him, 'I *am* an Amalekite.' He said to me again, 'Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still *remains* in me.' So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that *was* on his head and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord."

a. **As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa:**

Some wonder if this Amalekite told the truth. He said he "mercifully" ended Saul's life after the king mortally wounded himself (1Sa 31:4). It may be that he merely was the first to come upon Saul's dead body and he took the royal **crown** and **bracelet** to receive a reward from David.

i. "The whole account which this young man gives is a fabrication: in many of the particulars it is grossly *self-contradictory*. There is no *fact* in the case but the bringing of the *crown*, or *diadem*, and *bracelets* of Saul; which, as he appears to have been a plunderer of the slain, he found on the field of battle; and he brought them to David, and told the lie of having dispatched Saul merely to ingratiate himself with David." (Clarke)

ii. We can gather that this was a lie because 1Sa 31:5 says that Saul's armor bearer saw that he was dead.

b. **I am an Amalekite:** If we do take the Amalekite's story as true, this is a chilling statement. In a unique war

of judgment, God commanded Saul to completely destroy the people of Amalek (1Sa 15:2-3). Saul failed to do this - and **an Amalekite** brought a bitter end to his tragic life.

i. Though the Bible does not specifically say it, Amalek is commonly regarded as an illustration of our fleshly, carnal nature.

- Like our fleshly nature, Amalek focuses its attack on the tired and weak (Deu 25:17-18).
- Like our fleshly nature, Amalek does not fear God (Deu 25:17-18).
- Like our fleshly nature, God commanded a permanent state of war against Amalek (Exo 17:16).
- Like our fleshly nature, the battle against Amalek is only won in the context of prayer and seeking God (Exo 17:11).
- Like our fleshly nature, God promises to one day completely blot out the remembrance of Amalek (Exo 17:14).
- Like our fleshly nature, Joshua wins the battle against Amalek (Exo 17:13).
- Like our fleshly nature, Amalek was once first but will one day be last (Num 24:20).
- Like our fleshly nature, Amalek allies itself with other enemies in battle against God's people (Jdg 3:13).

ii. Using this picture, we see that Saul's failure to deal with Amalek when God told him to resulted in ruin, with an Amalekite delivering the death-blow. In the same way, when we fail to deal with the flesh as God prompts us, we can expect that area of the flesh to come back and deliver some deadly strikes.

c. **I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord:** We can easily imagine the Amalekite smiling as he said this, assuming David was delighted that his enemy and rival was dead. Now David could take the royal **crown** and **bracelet** and wear them himself.

3. (11-12) *David's reaction: mourning for Saul.*

**Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.**

a. **David took hold of his own clothes and tore them:** When David heard of Saul's death, *he mourned*. We might have expected *celebration* at the death of this great enemy and rival, but David **mourned**.

i. Out of pure jealousy, hatred, spite, and ungodliness, Saul took away David's family, home, career, security, and the best years of David's life - and Saul was *utterly unrepentant* to the end. Yet David **mourned and wept and fasted** when he learned of Saul's death.

ii. This contrast powerfully demonstrates that our hatred, bitterness, and unforgiveness are *chosen*, not *imposed* on us. As much as Saul did against David, he chose to become *better* instead of *bitter*.

b. **And so did all the men who were with him:** These men had their own reasons to hate Saul, but they followed the example of their leader, David, and answered Saul's hatred and venom with love.



c. **For Saul and Jonathan... for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel:** David's sorrow was first for Saul, but it was also for his great and close friend Jonathan. More than that, it was for the people of God as a whole, who were in a dangerous and desperate place in light of the death of the king and the defeat by the Philistines.

i. David heard this life-changing news - the throne of Israel was now vacant, and it seemed that the royal anointing he received some 20 years before might now be fulfilled with the crown set on his head. Nevertheless, David expressed little thought of himself. "His generous soul, oblivious to itself, poured out a flood of the noblest tears man ever shed for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel, because they were fallen by the sword." (Meyer)

4. (13-16) *David executes the Amalekite.*

**Then David said to the young man who told him, "Where are you from?" And he answered, "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite." So David said to him, "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" Then David called one of the young men and said, "Go near, and execute him!" And he struck him so that he died. So David said to him, "Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'"**

a. **Where are you from:** The young Amalekite probably believed that David was preparing to reward him.

b. **How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed:** Despite many opportunities to legitimately defend himself, David refused to reach out and destroy Saul. David knew that

since God put Saul on the throne, it was God's job to end his reign - and woe to the one who puts forth *his* hand to destroy a God-appointed leader.

c. **Go near, and execute him:** This shows that David's grief over Saul was real. He didn't put on a false display of grief and then secretly honor the man who killed Saul.

d. **Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you:** There were many factors that might excuse what the Amalekite did and said.

- Saul was in rebellion and hardened against God.
- Saul repeatedly and constantly tried to kill David.
- Saul was already near death.
- Saul asked the Amalekite to kill him.
- It may be that the Amalekite merely discovered Saul's dead body.

i. Yet none of these excuses mattered. Except for justified killing in war, self-defense, or lawful criminal execution, it is God's job to end a life - not ours. This is true of every human life, but it is even truer of the life and ministry of **the LORD's anointed** - God is fully able to deal with His servants, even those who only *claim* to be His servants.

## **B. David's lament for Saul and Jonathan**

### *1. (17-18) Introduction to the **Song of the Bow.***

**Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told *them* to teach the children of Judah *the Song of the Bow*; indeed *it is written in the Book of Jasher*:**

- a. **David lamented with this lamentation:** David's sorrow was sincere and deeply felt. He crafted a song to

express the depth of his feeling.

b. **The book of Jashar**: This book is also mentioned in Jos 10:13; it evidently contained a collection of early Hebrew poetry.

i. We shouldn't think that this is a "missing" book of the Bible. It is a *completely unjustified leap* over logic to say that if the Bible *mentions* an ancient writing, and if that ancient writing has any material in common with Biblical books, that writing is genuinely Scripture and is a "lost" book of the Bible. Our Bibles are complete and completely inspired.

## 2. (19-27) *The **Song of the Bow***.

**"The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places!  
How the mighty have fallen!**

**Tell *it* not in Gath,**

**Proclaim *it* not in the streets of Ashkelon;**

**Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,**

**Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.**

**O mountains of Gilboa,**

***Let there be* no dew nor rain upon you,**

**Nor fields of offerings.**

**For the shield of the mighty is cast away there!**

**The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.**

**From the blood of the slain,**

**From the fat of the mighty,**

**The bow of Jonathan did not turn back,**

**And the sword of Saul did not return empty.**

**Saul and Jonathan *were* beloved and pleasant in their lives,**

**And in their death they were not divided;**

**They were swifter than eagles,**

**They were stronger than lions.**

**O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,**

**Who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury;**

**Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.  
How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!  
Jonathan was slain in your high places.  
I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;  
You have been very pleasant to me;  
Your love to me was wonderful,  
Surpassing the love of women.  
How the mighty have fallen,  
And the weapons of war perished!"**

a. **The beauty of Israel is slain:** In this song, David showed the great love and generosity in his heart towards Saul. It showed that David didn't kill Saul with a sword or in his heart.

- He saw **beauty** in Saul.
- He wanted no one to **rejoice** over the death of Saul.
- He wanted everyone to mourn, even the **mountains** and **fields**.
- He praised Saul as a **mighty** warrior.
- He complimented the personality and loyalty of Saul (**not divided**).
- He called the **daughters Israel** to mourning and praised the good Saul did for Israel.

i. All this is a powerful testimony of how David kept his heart free from bitterness, even when he was greatly wronged and sinned against. David fulfilled 1Co 13:5 : *love thinks no evil*. David knew the principle of 1Pe 4:8 : *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

ii. David could do this because of his great trust in God and God's power. He knew that God was in

charge of his life, and that even if Saul meant it for evil, God could use it for good.

iii. "Such a magnanimous attitude on the part of one who had suffered so much at Saul's hand is incomprehensible apart from a deep commitment to the Lord." (Baldwin)

b. **How the mighty have fallen:** David doesn't say it, but we understand that Saul *fell* long before this. He fell when he hardened his heart against God, against the word of God through the prophet, and against the man after God's own heart. Saul's death on Gilboa was the sad conclusion to his prior fall.

c. **I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan:** David's mourning for Jonathan makes more sense to us. Jonathan was David's deep friend and partner in serving God.

i. **Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women:** Had David followed God's plan for marriage - to one woman, faithful for a lifetime - he might have found more fulfillment in his marriage relationship. We remember that David's own experience of love with women was not according to God's will. His multiple marriages kept him from God's ideal: one man and one woman in a one-flesh relationship.

ii. There is not the slightest hint that David and Jonathan expressed their love in a sexual way. They had a deep, godly love for each other - but not a sexual love. Our modern age often finds it difficult to believe that love can be deep and real without it having a sexual aspect.

## **David Anointed King of Judah**

**2Sa 2:1** After this, David asked the LORD, "Shall I go and take control of one of the towns of Judah?" "Yes," the LORD answered. "Which one?" David asked. "Hebron," the LORD said.

2Sa 2:2 So David went to Hebron, taking with him his two wives: Ahinoam, who was from Jezreel, and Abigail, Nabal's widow, who was from Carmel.

2Sa 2:3 He also took his men and their families, and they settled in the towns around Hebron.

2Sa 2:4 Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and anointed David as king of Judah. When David heard that the people of Jabesh in Gilead had buried Saul,

2Sa 2:5 he sent some men there with the message: "May the LORD bless you for showing your loyalty to your king by burying him.

2Sa 2:6 And now may the LORD be kind and faithful to you. I too will treat you well because of what you have done.

2Sa 2:7 Be strong and brave! Saul your king is dead, and the people of Judah have anointed me as their king."

### **Ish-bosheth Made King of Israel**

2Sa 2:8 The commander of Saul's army, Abner son of Ner, had fled with Saul's son Ishbosheth across the Jordan to Mahanaim.

2Sa 2:9 There Abner made Ishbosheth king of the territories of Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin, and indeed over all Israel.

2Sa 2:10 He was forty years old when he was made king of Israel, and he ruled for two years. But the tribe of Judah was loyal to David,

2Sa 2:11 and he ruled in Hebron over Judah for seven and a half years.

### **The Battle of Gibeon**

2Sa 2:12 Abner and the officials of Ishbosheth went from Mahanaim to the city of Gibeon.

2Sa 2:13 Joab, whose mother was Zeruiah, and David's other officials met them at the pool, where they all sat down, one group on one side of the pool and the other group on the opposite side.

2Sa 2:14 Abner said to Joab, "Let's have some of the young men from each side fight an armed contest." "All right," Joab answered.

2Sa 2:15 So twelve men, representing Ishbosheth and the tribe of Benjamin, fought twelve of David's men.

2Sa 2:16 Each man caught his opponent by the head and plunged his sword into his opponent's side, so that all twenty-four of them fell down dead together. And so that place in Gibeon is called "Field of Swords."

2Sa 2:17 Then a furious battle broke out, and Abner and the Israelites were defeated by David's men.

2Sa 2:18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel, who could run as fast as a wild deer,

2Sa 2:19 started chasing Abner, running straight for him.

2Sa 2:20 Abner looked back and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" "Yes," he answered.

2Sa 2:21 "Stop chasing me!" Abner said. "Run after one of the soldiers and take what he has." But Asahel kept on chasing him.

2Sa 2:22 Once more Abner said to him, "Stop chasing me! Why force me to kill you? How could I face your brother Joab?"

2Sa 2:23 But Asahel would not quit; so Abner, with a backward thrust of his spear, struck him through the stomach so that the spear came out at his back. Asahel dropped to the ground dead, and everyone who came to the place where he was lying stopped and stood there.

2Sa 2:24 But Joab and Abishai started out after Abner, and at sunset they came to the hill of Ammah, which is to the east of Giah on the road to the wilderness of Gibeon.

2Sa 2:25 The men from the tribe of Benjamin gathered around Abner again and took their stand on the top of a hill.

2Sa 2:26 Abner called out to Joab, "Do we have to go on fighting forever? Can't you see that in the end there will be nothing but bitterness? We are your relatives. How long will it be before you order your men to stop chasing us?"

2Sa 2:27 "I swear by the living God," Joab answered, "that if you had not spoken, my men would have kept on chasing you until tomorrow morning."

2Sa 2:28 Then Joab blew the trumpet as a signal for his men to stop pursuing the Israelites; and so the fighting stopped.

2Sa 2:29 Abner and his men marched through the Jordan Valley all that night; they crossed the Jordan River, and after marching all the next morning, they arrived back at Mahanaim.

2Sa 2:30 When Joab gave up the chase, he gathered all his men and found that nineteen of them were missing, in addition to Asahel.

2Sa 2:31 David's men had killed 360 of Abner's men from the tribe of Benjamin.

2Sa 2:32 Joab and his men took Asahel's body and buried it in the family tomb at Bethlehem. Then they marched all night and at dawn arrived back at Hebron.

## **2 Samuel 2:1-32**

### **2 Samuel 2 - David and the War with Ishbosheth**

#### **A. Two kings over the people of God.**

*1. (1-4a) David, king of Judah.*



**It happened after this that David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron." So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. And David brought up the men who *were* with him, every man with his household. So they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.**

a. **David inquired of the LORD:** Certainly, this was a key to success in David's life. With rare exceptions, he constantly **inquired of the LORD**. David wanted more than God's blessing on *his* plans; he wanted to be right in the middle of *God's* plan.

b. **Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah:** At this time David was still in Ziklag, in the territory of the Philistines. Out of great discouragement and despair, he left the land of Israel and lived almost as a Philistine among the Philistines. Now that David was restored to the LORD, he wondered if it was time for him to go back to his homeland.

i. It isn't as simple a question as we might think. David didn't want to appear opportunistic, as if he *only* came back to Israel because Saul was dead. While not being *overly* concerned with appearances before man, he was not *unconcerned* with appearances either.

c. **And the LORD said to him:** God was faithful to answer when David inquired. Since David just came out of a period of spiritual decline, God could have put him on "probation" and refused to speak to him for a while.

Instead, the LORD spoke to David and gave him guidance.

i. Some 15 to 20 years before this, David was anointed king over Israel (1Sa 16:12-13). As the promise seems almost fulfilled, David didn't rush in blindly and seize it. Instead, he carefully sought the LORD. David knew the promise was from God, so he knew God could fulfill it without any manipulation from David.

d. **There they anointed David king:** This shows that David did not seize the throne. The elders of Judah approached him. David knew that it was better to let God lift you up through others than to strive to advance yourself. We should strive to advance God's Kingdom and leave the advancement of self in His hands.

i. This also shows that there is a sense in which the first anointing wasn't enough. We need a fresh anointing from God and ongoing experience with the Holy Spirit.

ii. This anointing couldn't come when David still lived among the Philistines virtually as a Philistine. He had to get things right in his own walk before this fresh anointing.

*2. (4b-7) David thanks the men of Jabesh Gilead.*

**And they told David, saying, "The men of Jabesh Gilead were *the ones* who buried Saul." So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, "You *are* blessed of the LORD, for you have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him. And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing. Now therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your**

**master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”**

a. **You have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him:** David showed appropriate gratitude to the men who risked their lives to honor the memory of Saul and Jonathan (1Sa 31:11-13).

b. **Let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant:** David knew that he needed brave men like these to secure and advance his kingdom, especially in the turmoil sure to surround his ascension to the throne.

*3. (8-11) Abner sets up Ishbosheth as king over Israel.*

**But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.**

a. **Abner the son of Ner:** Abner was Saul’s cousin (1Sa 14:50) and the commander of Saul’s armies for many years. He first met David when David was a young man (1Sa 17:55-57). David once challenged Abner when he had the opportunity to kill Saul but did not. David pointed out that Abner failed to protect his king.

b. **Ishbosheth the Son of Saul:** Saul had three sons who died with him in battle (1Sa 31:6). There is no previous mention of **Ishbosheth** among the sons of Saul, so it is possible that he was an illegitimate son or the son of a concubine.

i. We shouldn't forget that David was also a son of Saul by marriage. David married Michal, the daughter of Saul (1Sa 18:17-30).

c. **He made him king:** Abner **made** Ishbosheth king, probably so that he could be the real power behind the throne of a weak king.

d. **He reigned two years:** For **two years** David allowed Ishbosheth to reign over most of Israel. These two years showed remarkable patience, longsuffering, and trust in God on David's part. Ishbosheth was not the LORD's anointed like Saul - David seemed to have every right to crush this man who stood in the way of his calling. Yet out of trust in the LORD and respect for Saul's memory, David waited.

i. It seems strange that many of the tribes preferred Ishbosheth to David. Yet since the Philistines had overrun many of the other tribes of Israel, they were even more hesitant to come out-and-out for David. "We'll just make the Philistines mad," they thought. In the same way, if you will come out-and-out for the Son of David, you have to be ready for the disapproval of the Philistines.

e. **Seven years and six months:** This describes the period of time David had his headquarters in Hebron. For the first two years of this time, he ruled over Judah alone and Ishbosheth (propped up by Abner) ruled the rest of Israel.

i. David refused to force his reign on his subjects - and neither will the Son of David. Like David, Jesus will battle against pretenders to the throne, but He will not force His reign on mankind - yet.

## **B. War between the tribe of Judah and the other tribes of Israel.**

1. (12-17) *Abner's troops and Joab's troops square off and fiercely battle.*

**Now Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. So they sat down, one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool. Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and compete before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise." So they arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, *followers* of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David. And each one grasped his opponent by the head and *thrust* his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords, which *is* in Gibeon. So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.**

a. **Joab the son of Zeruiah:** Joab was apparently one of the 400 men who joined David at Adullam Cave (1Sa 22:1-2), or he joined with David during this general period.

- Joab had two notable brothers: Abishai and Asahel.
- Joab, Abishai, and Asahel were David's nephews, the sons of David's sister Zeruiah (1Ch 2:16).
- Joab had a long and checkered career as David's chief general.

b. **Abner said to Joab:** This was a fascinating confrontation between two similar men. **Abner** and **Joab** were each tough, mean, military men who were completely devoted to their cause.

c. **Let the young men now arise and compete before us:** Abner suggested some kind of contest or duel between a select group of his men and Joab's men. When the two groups of 12 met, it quickly degenerated into a mutual bloodbath (**each one grasped his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together**). Yet David's men under the command of Joab prevailed in the **very fierce battle** that followed this bloodbath at **the Field of Sharp Swords**.

i. "This was diabolical play, where each man thrust his sword into the body of the other, so that the twenty-four (twelve on each side) fell down dead together!" (Clarke)

## *2. (18-23) Abner kills Asahel.*

**Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab and Abishai and Asahel. And Asahel was as fleet of foot as a wild gazelle. So Asahel pursued Abner, and in going he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner. Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Are you Asahel?" He answered, "I am." And Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and lay hold on one of the young men and take his armor for yourself." But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. So Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother Joab?" However, he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear, so that the spear came out of his back; and he fell down there and died on the spot. So it was *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still.**

a. **The three sons of Zeruiah:** **Zeruiah** was David's sister (1Ch 2:16). **Joab and Abishai and Asahel** were the nephews of David, but since David was the youngest of eight sons, they may have been about the same age or older than David.

b. **Asahel pursued Abner:** In the pressure and confusion of battle, Asahel got close enough to Abner, the commander of Ishbosheth's armies. It came down to a simple chase, and if Asahel caught up to Abner, he would surely kill him.

c. **Lay hold of one of the young men and take his armor for yourself:** It seems that Asahel pursued Abner in part for the glory of killing the commander of Ishbosheth's army and taking

**his armor** as a trophy.

d. **Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother Joab:** Abner first asked Asahel to turn back out of concern for his own safety. This didn't make much sense to Asahel because it seemed that Abner was at the disadvantage. Abner also appealed to Asahel on the ground of military honor - that officers should not strike down officers, especially when it might lead to ugly retribution and the danger of leaderless armies.

i. Yet, Asahel **refused to turn aside**. Abner's plea didn't work - though perhaps it should have. Asahel was too single-minded in his determination to kill Abner and crush the armies opposing David.

e. **Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach... he fell down there and died on the spot:** Clearly, Abner killed Asahel in self-defense - it was the only thing he could do. Yet his concern (**How then could I face your**

**brother Joab**) was entirely justified, and Joab will make it his passion to avenge his brother's death.

*3. (24-28) A cease-fire called.*

**Joab and Abishai also pursued Abner. And the sun was going down when they came to the hill of Ammah, which is before Giah by the road to the Wilderness of Gibeon. Now the children of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became a unit, and took their stand on top of a hill. Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end? How long will it be then until you tell the people to return from pursuing their brethren?" And Joab said, "As God lives, unless you had spoken, surely then by morning all the people would have given up pursuing their brethren." So Joab blew a trumpet; and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore.**

a. **Joab and Abishai also pursued Abner:** Now more than the cause of David motivated them. They wanted to avenge the killing of their brother Asahel.

b. **Shall the sword devour forever:** When his armies were in full retreat and ready for a final do-or-die stand - and when two angry brothers wanted blood revenge - Joab found it easy to make the plea for peace. It was certainly to his advantage to give peace a chance.

c. **Joab blew a trumpet; and all the people stood still:** Joab agreed to this cease-fire, probably to both rest his exhausted army and to avoid a long, bloody civil war.

*4. (2:29-3:1) A great victory for David's army.*

**Then Abner and his men went on all that night through the plain, crossed over the Jordan, and went**



through all Bithron; and they came to Mahanaim. So Joab returned from pursuing Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel. But the servants of David had struck down, of Benjamin and Abner's men, three hundred and sixty men who died. Then they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb, which *was in* Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at daybreak. Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

a. **There were missing of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel:** 2Sa 2:17 told us *Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David*, but this passage shows us just how badly they were beaten. Abner and the army of Ishbosheth lost 360 men to 20 in the army of David.

b. **There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David:** This shows how wrong it was for Joab to accept Abner's appeal for a cease-fire at the battle of The Field of Sharp Swords. The fact was that they *couldn't* just get along, and that there could be no peace between the rightful king David and the pretender to the throne, Ishbosheth. The cease-fire seemed to make things better, but in reality, it only made things worse and it led to the **long war**.

i. When we try to make peace between King Jesus and King Self within us, the result is a long, bitter war. It is so much better to simply surrender and submit to the reign of Jesus.

ii. "In the lives of many Christian people today there is raging, literally, a civil war. The flesh - the kingdom

of Saul, struggles with the spirit - the kingdom of David, and the conflict is bitter. We do everything we possibly can to hold up the tottering kingdom of self, so that it might exist just a bit longer. If only we could preserve some rights; if only we could have at least part of our own way; if only we could keep this or that at any cost! We feel we must bolster up this kingdom of self, that we cannot let ourselves be crucified with Christ." (Redpath)

c. **David grew stronger and stronger:** The increasing strength of David and increasing weakness of Saul's house did not begin when Saul died. It began when God first chose David and withdrew His Spirit from Saul (1Sa 16:13-14).

### **Abner Joins David**

**2Sa 3:1** The fighting between the forces supporting Saul's family and those supporting David went on for a long time. As David became stronger and stronger, his opponents became weaker and weaker.

2Sa 3:2 The following six sons, in order of their birth, were born to David at Hebron: Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam, from Jezreel;

2Sa 3:3 Chileab, whose mother was Abigail, Nabal's widow, from Carmel; Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of King Talmai of Geshur;

2Sa 3:4 Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith; Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital;

2Sa 3:5 Ithream, whose mother was Eglah. All of these sons were born in Hebron.

2Sa 3:6 As the fighting continued between David's forces and the forces loyal to Saul's family, Abner became more and more powerful among Saul's followers.

2Sa 3:7 One day Ishbosheth son of Saul accused Abner of sleeping with Saul's concubine Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah.

2Sa 3:8 This made Abner furious. "Do you think that I would betray Saul? Do you really think I'm serving Judah?" he exclaimed. "From the very first I have been loyal to the cause of your father Saul, his brothers, and his friends, and I have kept you from being defeated by David; yet today you find fault with me about a woman!"

2Sa 3:9 (9-10) The LORD promised David that he would take the kingdom away from Saul and his descendants and would make David king of both Israel and Judah, from one end of the country to the other. Now may God strike me dead if I don't make this come true!"

2Sa 3:11 Ishbosheth was so afraid of Abner that he could not say a word.

2Sa 3:12 Abner sent messengers to David, who at that time was at Hebron, to say, "Who is going to rule this land? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you win all Israel over to your side."

2Sa 3:13 "Good!" David answered. "I will make an agreement with you on one condition: you must bring Saul's daughter Michal to me when you come to see me."

2Sa 3:14 And David also sent messengers to Ishbosheth to say, "Give me back my wife Michal. I paid a hundred Philistine foreskins in order to marry her."

2Sa 3:15 So Ishbosheth had her taken from her husband Paltiel son of Laish.

2Sa 3:16 Paltiel followed her all the way to the town of Bahurim, crying as he went. But when Abner said, "Go back home," he did.

2Sa 3:17 Abner went to the leaders of Israel and said to them, "For a long time you have wanted David to be your king."

2Sa 3:18 Now here is your chance. Remember that the LORD has said, 'I will use my servant David to rescue my people Israel from the Philistines and from all their other enemies.' "

2Sa 3:19 Abner spoke also to the people of the tribe of Benjamin and then went to Hebron to tell David what the people of Benjamin and of Israel had agreed to do.

2Sa 3:20 When Abner came to David at Hebron with twenty men, David gave a feast for them.

2Sa 3:21 Abner told David, "I will go now and win all Israel over to Your Majesty. They will accept you as king, and then you will get what you have wanted and will rule over the whole land." David gave Abner a guarantee of safety and sent him on his way.

2Sa 3:22 Later on Joab and David's other officials returned from a raid, bringing a large amount of loot with them. Abner, however, was no longer there at Hebron with David, because David had sent him away with a guarantee of safety.

2Sa 3:23 When Joab and his men arrived, he was told that Abner had come to King David and had been sent away with a guarantee of safety.

2Sa 3:24 So Joab went to the king and said to him, "What have you done? Abner came to you—why did you let him go like that?

2Sa 3:25 He came here to deceive you and to find out everything you do and everywhere you go. Surely you know that!"

### **Joab Murders Abner**

2Sa 3:26 After leaving David, Joab sent messengers to get Abner, and they brought him back from Sirah Well; but David knew nothing about it.

2Sa 3:27 When Abner arrived in Hebron, Joab took him aside at the gate, as though he wanted to speak privately with him, and there he stabbed him in the stomach. And so Abner was murdered because he had killed Joab's brother Asahel.

2Sa 3:28 When David heard the news, he said, "The LORD knows that my subjects and I are completely innocent of the murder of Abner.

2Sa 3:29 May the punishment for it fall on Joab and all his family! In every generation may there be some man in his family who has gonorrhea or a dreaded skin disease or is fit only to do a woman's work or is killed in battle or doesn't have enough to eat!"

2Sa 3:30 So Joab and his brother Abishai took revenge on Abner for killing their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

### **David Mourns Abner**

2Sa 3:31 Then David ordered Joab and his men to tear their clothes, wear sackcloth, and mourn for Abner. And at the funeral King David himself walked behind the coffin.

2Sa 3:32 Abner was buried at Hebron, and the king wept aloud at the grave, and so did all the people.

2Sa 3:33 David sang this lament for Abner: "Why did Abner have to die like a fool?

2Sa 3:34 His hands were not tied, And his feet were not bound; He died like someone killed by criminals!" And the people wept for him again.

2Sa 3:35 All day long the people tried to get David to eat something, but he made a solemn promise, "May God strike me dead if I eat anything before the day is over!"

2Sa 3:36 They took note of this and were pleased. Indeed, everything the king did pleased the people.

2Sa 3:37 All of David's people and all the people in Israel understood that the king had no part in the murder of Abner.

2Sa 3:38 The king said to his officials, "Don't you realize that this day a great leader in Israel has died?"

2Sa 3:39 Even though I am the king chosen by God, I feel weak today. These sons of Zeruiah are too violent for me. May the LORD punish these criminals as they deserve!"

## **2 Samuel 3:1-39**

### **2 Samuel 3 - Abner's Defection and Murder**

#### **A. Abner defects from Ishbosheth.**

*1. (2-5) David's sons born in Hebron.*

**Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.**

a. **Sons were born to David:** During David's seven-year reign in Hebron, his six different wives gave birth to six sons. This shows that David went against God's commandment that Israel's king should not multiply wives to himself.

i. David was *wrong* to have more than one wife. His many wives went against God's command to kings (Deu 17:17) and against God's heart for marriage (Gen 2:24, Mat 19:4-6).

ii. David's many wives were *common*. Adding many wives was one way great men and especially kings expressed their power and status.

iii. David was *troubled* because of his many wives. Some wonder why the Bible doesn't expressly condemn David's polygamy here, but as is often the case, the Scripture simply states the fact and later records how David reaped the penalty for this sort of sin in regard to his family.

b. **These were born to David in Hebron:** We must say that God used and blessed David *despite* his many wives. Yet his family life and these sons were obviously not blessed. "By six wives he had but six sons. God was not pleased with his polygamy." (Trapp)

i. **Amnon** raped his half-sister and was murdered by his half-brother.

ii. **Chileab** is also known as *Daniel* in 1Ch 3:1. The few mentions of this son indicate that perhaps he died young or that he was an ungodly, unworthy man.

iii. **Absalom** murdered his half-brother and led a civil war against his father David, attempting to murder David.

iv. **Adonijah** tried to seize the throne from David and David's appointed successor - then he tried to take one of David's concubines and was executed for his arrogance.

v. We can fairly assume that **Shephatiah** and **Ithream** either died young or were ungodly and unworthy men because they are mentioned only once again in the Scriptures - in a generic listing of David's sons (1Ch 3:1-4).

2. (6-7) *Ishbosheth accuses Abner of impropriety with the royal concubine.*

**Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner was strengthening *his hold* on the house of Saul. And Saul**

**had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"**

**a. Abner was strengthening his hold on the house of Saul:** It seems that Abner supported a weak man like Ishbosheth in power, so he could be the power behind the throne. As time went on, he increased in strength and influence **on the house of Saul.**

**b. Why have you gone in to my father's concubine:** Ishbosheth accused Abner of a serious crime. Taking a royal **concubine** was regarded as both sexual immorality and treason.

i. "To take the wife or concubine of the late monarch was to appropriate his property and to make a bid for the throne." (Baldwin)

ii. This might seem strange that there was a controversy over the **concubine** of **Saul**, especially because Saul was dead. Yet in their thinking, the king's bride belonged to him and him alone, even if he was absent. This principle is even more true for Jesus and His bride - the church belongs to no one but Jesus, and it is treason to "take" the bride of Christ as if she were our own possession.

*3. (8-11) Abner's harsh reply.*

**Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman? May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the LORD has sworn to him—to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and**



**set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.” And he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.**

a. **Then Abner became very angry:** We aren’t specifically told, but Abner’s response leads us to believe that the accusation was false. It is possible that as he *was strengthening his hold on the house of Saul* he took the concubine as an expression of his power and dominance. It is more likely that because of Abner’s increasing power Ishbosheth felt it necessary to invent this accusation as a reason to get rid of Abner.

b. **If I do not do for David as the LORD has sworn to him:** Abner told Ishbosheth that he would now support David and help David fulfill what the LORD promised - **to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David.**

i. If Abner knew that David was God’s choice for king, he had no good reason to fight against him before this. Abner is a good example of those of us who *know* things to be true, but we don’t *live* as if they were true.

ii. Abner did the right thing in joining David’s side, but he did it for the wrong reason. Instead of joining David because Ishbosheth offended him personally, he should have joined David because he knew that David was God’s choice to be king.

4. (12-16) *David agrees to receive Abner if he will bring Michal with him.*

**Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, “Whose *is* the land?” saying *also*, “Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand *shall be* with you to bring all Israel to you.” And *David* said, “Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I**

**require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face." So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give *me* my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." And Ishbosheth sent and took her from *her* husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, "Go, return!" And he returned.**

**a. You shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter:** David received Michal in marriage (1Sa 18:26-28), but Saul took her away to spite David (1Sa 25:44).

**b. Whom I betrothed to myself with a hundred foreskins of the Philistines:** 1Sa 18:20-30 describes how David used this unusual payment instead of a dowry for the right to marry the daughter of King Saul.

i. "He might have said two hundred; but he thought better to speak with the least." (Trapp)

**c. Give me my wife Michal:** Apparently, David was not done adding to his collection of wives. He insisted on receiving Michal as his wife again for at least three reasons.

i. David remembered that Michal was his wife by both love and right and that King Saul took her away as part of a deliberate strategy to attack and destroy David.

ii. David wanted to show that he harbored no bitterness towards Saul's house, and he would show this through his good treatment of Saul's daughter.

iii. David wanted to give himself a greater claim to Saul's throne as his son-in-law.

iv. "However distressing it was to take her from a husband who loved her most tenderly, yet prudence and policy required that he should strengthen his own interest in the kingdom as much as possible." (Clarke)

d. **Abner said to him, "Go, return!" And he returned:** This fits with the personality of Abner as we know him throughout 1 and 2 Samuel. Abner was a very tough guy.

5. (17-19) *Abner rallies support for David among the other tribes.*

**Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David to be king over you. Now then, do *it!* For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.'" And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin. Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin.**

a. **Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel:** It is significant that this word came from **Abner** regarding David instead of coming from David himself. Though he was the rightful king, David would not reign over Israel until they submitted to him freely. He never moved an inch without an invitation.

i. This is an illustration of Jesus' lordship in our life. He is in fact King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But He chooses (for the most part) to exercise His sovereignty only at our invitation.

- Some do not invite Jesus to rule over anything.
- Some invite Jesus to reign over a small area - like "Hebron."

- Some give Jesus reign over everything He has authority over - which is everything.

ii. Abner is a good example of someone who eventually surrendered to God's king. Now he wanted to influence others to also surrender to God's king.

b. **Now then, do it:** Because of the word the LORD spoke of David, and because it was so right to do, this was something that should be done **now**. In this sense, it is very much like our commitment to follow Jesus - we should be told, "**Now then, do it!**"

i. Charles Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon on this text titled, "Now Then, Do It." In this sermon he shows how the same principles of Israel's embrace of David as king apply to our relationship with Jesus. "The Israelites might talk about making David king, but they would not crown him. They might meet together and say they wished it were so, but that would not do it. It might be generally admitted that he ought to be monarch, and it might even be earnestly hoped that one day he would be so, but that would not do it; something more decided must be done." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The sooner it is done the better. Until the deed is done, remember you are undone; till Christ is accepted by you as king, till sin is hated and Jesus is trusted, you are under another king. Whatever you may think of it, the devil is your master."

c. **For the LORD has spoken of David:** The fact that Abner - who was a general, not a Bible scholar - knew these prophecies and the fact that he could ask the leaders of Israel to consider them means that these prophecies of David were widely known. Sadly, they were not widely obeyed - most of Israel was lukewarm and unenthusiastic in their embrace of David as king.

i. In this regard David prefigures his greater Son. Jesus fulfilled all manner of prophecy regarding the Messiah, yet He was rejected by all but a remnant of Israel.

ii. We don't have a Biblical record of this exact statement Abner said **the LORD has spoken of David**. "We read not that God had so said in express terms: but either Abner had heard of such a promise made at the anointing of David by Samuel, or else feigned it of his own head for his own ends." (Trapp)

6. (20-21) *David formally receives Abner with a feast.*

**So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. Then Abner said to David, "I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.**

a. **David made a feast for Abner:** This was David showing himself wise and generous towards a former adversary. A lesser man would never forgive Abner for leading an army against God's king, but David was a great, wise, and generous man.

b. **That you may reign over all that your heart desires:** Abner wanted David's reign to be fully realized over the people of God.

## **B. Joab murders Abner.**

1. (22-25) *Joab learns that Abner has joined David's side.*

**At that moment the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. When Joab and all the troops that were with him had come, they told**

**Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace." Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why *is* it *that* you sent him away, and he has already gone? Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing."**

**a. Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you:** Joab accused Abner of being a double agent for Ishbosheth. He was angry that David let Abner go without arresting or killing him.

**b. Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you:** This was one of at least three reasons why Joab was not pleased that Abner had defected and joined David's side.

i. Joab feared Abner was a deceiver, a double agent working on behalf of Ishbosheth, the pretender king.

ii. Abner killed Joab's brother, and Joab was the *avenger of blood* for Asahel (as described in Num 35:9-28).

iii. As the chief general of the former King Saul, Abner had a lot of top-level military experience. Abner might take Joab's place as David's chief military assistant.

**2. (26-27) Joab murders Abner.**

**And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know *it*. Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother.**

a. **Joab took him aside in the gate:** Joab carefully engineered this murder so that the killing was done *outside* the gate of Hebron. This was because Hebron was a city of refuge (Jos 20:7), and it was against the law for Joab, as Asahel's blood avenger, to kill Abner *inside* the city.

b. **He died for the blood of Asahel his brother:** The careful plot to murder Abner outside the city of refuge made the murder all the darker. It showed Joab *knew* that Abner had a rightful claim of self-defense and was protected inside the city of Hebron, yet he killed him anyway.

i. Joab may have justified this by the thought, "I'm doing this to defend and honor my king." But our sin and treachery never honors our king. We must avoid the trap Spurgeon spoke of: "We may even deceive ourselves into the belief that we are honoring our Lord and Master when we are, all the while, bringing disgrace upon his name."

3. (28-30) *David renounces Joab's evil murder of Abner.*

**Afterward, when David heard it, he said, "My kingdom and I are guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread." So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.**

a. **My kingdom and I are guiltless before the LORD:** David knew that he had nothing to do with this murder. Among other evils, this murder perpetrated by Joab set a bad precedent. It gave David's administration a

reputation for brutality and made it harder for David to win the rest of Israel over to his side.

b. **Let it rest on the head of Joab:** David pronounced a severe curse against Joab, but he *did nothing* to correct Joab. Perhaps David was afraid to lose Joab as a general. His ability to kill without remorse showed he was not a nice man, but not necessarily a bad general.

4. (31-39) *David leads the mourning for Abner.*

**Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner." And King David followed the coffin. So they buried Abner in Hebron—and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. And the king sang a lament over Abner and said:**

**"Should Abner die as a fool dies?  
Your hands were not bound  
nor your feet put into fetters;  
as a man falls before wicked men, so you fell."**

**Then all the people wept over him again. And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, "God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!" Now all the people took note *of it*, and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people. For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's *intent* to kill Abner the son of Ner. Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? And I *am* weak today, though anointed king—and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, *are* too harsh for me. The LORD shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness."**



a. **The king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner:** David did not want his kingdom established by violence. He wanted God to establish his kingdom and to punish his enemies. David still believed that *vengeance belongs to the Lord*.

b. **For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's intent to kill Abner:** This whole affair was a mess, but it would not be the first or the last mess of David's kingdom.

i. In some regard, "messes" like this are inevitable. Pro 14:4 states an important principle: *Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox.*

### **Ish-bosheth Murdered**

**2Sa 4:1** When Saul's son Ishbosheth heard that Abner had been killed in Hebron, he was afraid, and all the people of Israel were alarmed.

2Sa 4:2 Ishbosheth had two officers who were leaders of raiding parties, Baanah and Rechab, sons of Rimmon, from Beeroth in the tribe of Benjamin. (Beeroth is counted as part of Benjamin.

2Sa 4:3 Its original inhabitants had fled to Gittaim, where they have lived ever since.)

2Sa 4:4 Another descendant of Saul was Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, who was five years old when Saul and Jonathan were killed. When the news about their death came from the city of Jezreel, his nurse picked him up and fled; but she was in such a hurry that she dropped him, and he became crippled.

2Sa 4:5 Rechab and Baanah set out for Ishbosheth's house and arrived there about noon, while he was taking his midday rest.

2Sa 4:6 The woman at the door had become drowsy while she was sifting wheat and had fallen asleep, so Rechab and Baanah slipped in.

2Sa 4:7 Once inside, they went to Ishbosheth's bedroom, where he was sound asleep, and killed him. Then they cut off his head, took it with them, and walked all night through the Jordan Valley.

2Sa 4:8 They presented the head to King David at Hebron and said to him, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of your enemy Saul, who tried to kill you. Today the LORD has allowed Your Majesty to take revenge on Saul and his descendants."

2Sa 4:9 David answered them, "I take a vow by the living LORD, who has saved me from all dangers!

2Sa 4:10 The messenger who came to me at Ziklag and told me of Saul's death thought he was bringing good news. I seized him and had him put to death. That was the reward I gave him for his good news!

2Sa 4:11 How much worse it will be for evil men who murder an innocent man asleep in his own house! I will now take revenge on you for murdering him and will wipe you off the face of the earth!"

2Sa 4:12 David gave the order, and his soldiers killed Rechab and Baanah and cut off their hands and feet, which they hung up near the pool in Hebron. They took Ishbosheth's head and buried it in Abner's tomb there at Hebron.

## **2 Samuel 4:1-12**

### **2 Samuel 4 - The Assassination of Ishbosheth**

#### **A. Ishbosheth is murdered.**

*1. (1-4) The weakened condition of the house of Saul.*

**When Saul's son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and all Israel was troubled. Now Saul's son *had* two men *who were* captains of troops. The name of one *was* Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin. (For Beeroth also *was part* of Benjamin, because the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there until this day.) Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son *who was* lame in *his* feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name *was* Mephibosheth.**

a. **He lost heart:** When Ishbosheth heard that the man who put and propped him on the throne was dead, he knew that his day was almost over. He trusted in man to gain his position, so when the man was gone, he knew his position would be soon gone. Ishbosheth was weak because he trusted in man.

b. **His name was Mephibosheth:** This was the son of Jonathan, David's good friend who died with his father on the field of battle. Mephibosheth was the last male descendant of Saul with a strong legal claim to the throne of Saul. At this time he was only 12 years old - and he was **lame**.

i. **As she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame:** Mephibosheth was weak because of circumstances beyond his control. He was weak because of his age and because of injury that came from the hand of another.

2. (5-7) *Baanah and Rechab murder Ishbosheth.*

**Then the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out and came at about the heat of the day**

to the house of Ishbosheth, who was lying on his bed at noon. And they came there, all the way into the house, *as though* to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. For when they came into the house, he was lying on his bed in his bedroom; then they struck him and killed him, beheaded him and took his head, and were all night escaping through the plain.

a. **They stabbed him in the stomach:** Ishbosheth didn't gain any real loyalty among his troops; they were only loyal to him when they thought he was strong and had a chance to keep the throne of Saul. When the weakness of Ishbosheth was exposed, **Rechab and Baanah** murdered him.

i. 2Sa 4:2 reminds us that **Rechab and Baanah** were *of the children of Benjamin*. This was the tribe that Saul's family came from. This means that it was fellow Benjaminites who murdered Ishbosheth.

ii. **Who was lying on his bed at noon:** The mid-day *siesta* wasn't unusual in that part of the world, but the absence of guards points to carelessness on the part of Ishbosheth. "To sleep at noon, and without a guard, speaketh him both sluggish and secure. He dieth therefore in his sloth, who had lived slothfully all his days." (Trapp)

b. **Beheaded him and took his head:** This was an important part of their plan, because they wanted to prove to David that they murdered his rival to the throne.

## **B. David executes Ishbosheth's assassins.**

1. (8) *Baanah and Rechab bring the head of Ishbosheth to David.*

**And they brought the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul your enemy, who sought your life; and the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants."**

**a. And the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants:** When they brought Ishbosheth's severed head to David they said, "We are God's servants, defeating your enemies as instruments of God."

i. "Their claim, *The Lord has avenged my lord the king*, was presuming on God's approval of their deed, as though they had acted on the Lord's express orders." (Baldwin)

**b. The son of Saul your enemy:** David couldn't relate to this because he didn't think of Saul as his **enemy**. The beautiful song David composed at the death of Saul and Jonathan proved that though Saul set himself as an enemy of David, David did not regard him as an **enemy**.

*2. (9-12) David has Baanah and Rechab executed.*

**But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity, when someone told me, saying, 'Look, Saul is dead,' thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag—the one who *thought* I would give him a reward for *his* news. How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?" So David commanded his young men, and they executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged *them* by the**

**pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried *it* in the tomb of Abner in Hebron.**

**a. Shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth:** Rechab and Baanah thought David would be *pleased* to see the severed head of Ishbosheth. They underestimated David's loyalty to God and the house of Saul. David was loyal to his pledge to honor and preserve Saul's family and descendants (1Sa 24:20-22).

i. David was used to seeing severed heads - he carried the head of Goliath around as a trophy for some period of time. But David knew that Saul and his descendants were not his enemy the same way that Goliath was his enemy.

ii. Even though Ishbosheth was not *the* LORD's anointed in the same sense as Saul was, David had thoroughly learned to let *God* take vengeance.

iii. David would not accept their evil deed, even though it seemed to serve a good purpose - unifying Israel under David's reign as king. "While it is true that God overrules all the doings of men, and compels them ultimately to serve His high purposes, it is equally true that no servant of His can ever consent to do evil that good may come. It is an arresting truth that our Lord in the days of his earthly life would not accept the testimony of demons." (Morgan)

**b. David commanded his young men, and they executed them:** David swiftly made an example of these murderous men. They were not soldiers fighting together with him; they were murderers who deserved just punishment.

i. "By this act of justice, David showed to all Israel that he was a decided enemy to the destruction of

Saul's family; and that none could lift up their hands against any of them without meeting with condign punishment." (Clarke)

ii. "Thus David acted with strict justice in this case also, not only to prove to the people that he had neither commanded nor approved of the murder, but from heartfelt abhorrence of such crimes, and to keep his conscience void of offense towards God and towards man." (Keil and Delitzsch)

### **David Anointed King of Israel**

**2Sa 5:1** Then all the tribes of Israel went to David at Hebron and said to him, "We are your own flesh and blood.

2Sa 5:2 In the past, even when Saul was still our king, you led the people of Israel in battle, and the LORD promised you that you would lead his people and be their ruler."

2Sa 5:3 So all the leaders of Israel came to King David at Hebron. He made a sacred alliance with them, they anointed him, and he became king of Israel.

2Sa 5:4 David was thirty years old when he became king, and he ruled for forty years.

2Sa 5:5 He ruled in Hebron over Judah for seven and a half years, and in Jerusalem over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

2Sa 5:6 The time came when King David and his men set out to attack Jerusalem. The Jebusites, who lived there, thought that David would not be able to conquer the city, and so they said to him, "You will never get in here; even the blind and the crippled could keep you out."

2Sa 5:7 (But David did capture their fortress of Zion, and it became known as "David's City.")

2Sa 5:8 That day David said to his men, "Does anybody here hate the Jebusites as much as I do? Enough to kill them? Then go up through the water tunnel and attack

those poor blind cripples." (That is why it is said, "The blind and the crippled cannot enter the LORD's house.")

2Sa 5:9 After capturing the fortress, David lived in it and named it "David's City." He built the city around it, starting at the place where land was filled in on the east side of the hill.

2Sa 5:10 He grew stronger all the time, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.

2Sa 5:11 King Hiram of Tyre sent a trade mission to David; he provided him with cedar logs and with carpenters and stone masons to build a palace.

2Sa 5:12 And so David realized that the LORD had established him as king of Israel and was making his kingdom prosperous for the sake of his people.

2Sa 5:13 After moving from Hebron to Jerusalem, David took more concubines and wives, and had more sons and daughters.

2Sa 5:14 The following children were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

2Sa 5:15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,

2Sa 5:16 Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

### **David Defeats the Philistines**

2Sa 5:17 The Philistines were told that David had been made king of Israel, so their army set out to capture him. When David heard of it, he went down to a fortified place.

2Sa 5:18 The Philistines arrived at Rephaim Valley and occupied it.

2Sa 5:19 David asked the LORD, "Shall I attack the Philistines? Will you give me the victory?" "Yes, attack!" the LORD answered. "I will give you the victory!"

2Sa 5:20 So David went to Baal Perazim and there he defeated the Philistines. He said, "The LORD has broken



through my enemies like a flood." And so that place is called Baal Perazim.

2Sa 5:21 When the Philistines fled, they left their idols behind, and David and his men carried them away.

2Sa 5:22 Then the Philistines went back to Rephaim Valley and occupied it again.

2Sa 5:23 Once more David consulted the LORD, who answered, "Don't attack them from here, but go around and get ready to attack them from the other side, near the balsam trees.

2Sa 5:24 When you hear the sound of marching in the treetops, then attack because I will be marching ahead of you to defeat the Philistine army."

2Sa 5:25 David did what the LORD had commanded, and was able to drive the Philistines back from Geba all the way to Gezer.

## **2 Samuel 5:1-25**

### **2 Samuel 5 - David Made King Over A United Israel**

#### **A. David reigns over all Israel.**

*1. (1-3) The elders of Israel recognize David as king over Israel.*

**Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and spoke, saying, "Indeed we *are* your bone and your flesh. Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel.'" Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And they anointed David king over Israel.**

a. **Then all the tribes of Israel came to David:** Prior to this, only one of the tribes of Israel recognized David as king. The other tribes recognized the pretend king Ishbosheth, a son of Saul. Ishbosheth was murdered as recorded in 2 Samuel 4 - so now the tribes turned to David.

i. It's sad that the tribes only turned to David when their previous choice was taken away. On the same principle, it's sad when Christians only really recognized Jesus as king when other choices crumble. We should choose Jesus outright, not just when other options fail.

b. **We are your bone and your flesh:** The elders of Israel received David's leadership because he was an Israelite himself. This was significant because for a period of time David lived as a Philistine among the Philistines. The elders of Israel put that away and embraced David as one of their own.

c. **You were the one who led Israel out and brought them in:** The elders of Israel received David's leadership because he already displayed his ability to lead.

d. **The LORD said to you, "You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel":** The elders of Israel received David's leadership because it was evident God called him to lead.

i. These three characteristics should mark anyone who leads God's people.

- A leader must belong to God's people in heritage and heart.
- A leader must demonstrate capability to lead.
- A leader must have an evident call from God.

ii. The elders of Israel received David's leadership when they saw these things in David. When we see these same things in leaders, we should also receive their leadership.

**e. And they anointed David king over Israel:** 1Ch 12:23-40 describes the great assembly that gathered in Hebron to recognize David as king over all Israel. Chronicles describes the impressive army that came to Hebron and numbers the soldiers at over 340,000 men. It then describes the scene: *All these men of war, who could keep ranks, came to Hebron with a loyal heart, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel were of one mind to make David king. And they were there with David three days, eating and drinking, for their brethren had prepared for them... for there was joy in Israel. (1Ch 12:38-40)*

2. (4-5) *The duration of David's reign.*

**David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.**

a. **David was thirty years old:** This is a good measuring point for David's life. Samuel anointed David when he was about 15, and he did not take the throne until 30. David spent at least 15 years in preparation for the throne of Israel.

b. **In Hebron he reigned... in Jerusalem he reigned:** All told, David reigned 40 years. His 15 years of preparation were not too long compared to his reign. God uses great preparation when the task is great.

**B. David captures Jerusalem.**

1. (6-8) *The capture of Jerusalem.*

**And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, "You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you," thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that *is*, the City of David). Now David said on that day, "Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, *who are* hated by David's soul), *he shall be chief and captain.*" Therefore they say, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house."**

**a. The king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites:** Up to this time Jerusalem was a small Canaanite city in the center of Israel. Some 400 years after God commanded Israel to take the whole land, this city was still in Canaanite hands.

**b. You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you:** Because of its location, Jerusalem was an easily defended city. This made the Jebusites overconfident and quick to mock David and his troops.

**c. Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion:** Despite the difficulty, David and his men took the city. Since the **water shaft** is mentioned, some think that David sent his men through what is called "Warren's Shaft." Whatever exactly their tactics, David and his men persisted through difficult circumstances to defeat an overconfident enemy.

i. On the same principle, King Jesus conquers old strongholds when he becomes king over our lives. Territory that should have been given to Him long ago is now conquered. "I want to say to you in the name of the Lord Jesus that there is no habit that has gone so deep but that the power of the blood of Jesus can go deeper, and there is no entrenchment of sin that

has gone so far but the power of the risen Lord, by His Holy Spirit, can go further.” (Redpath)

*2. (9-10) Jerusalem is David’s new capital city.*

**Then David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward. So David went on and became great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.**

a. **David dwelt in the stronghold:** Jerusalem became the capital city of David’s kingdom. It was a good choice because:

- It had no prior tribal association and was therefore good for a unified Israel.
- The geography of the city made it easy to defend against a hostile army.

b. **So David went on and became great:** David knew greatness, but he was by no means an “overnight success.” David was long prepared for the greatness he later enjoyed, and he came to the place of greatness because **the LORD God of hosts was with him.**

i. In God’s plan there is almost always a hidden price of greatness. Often those who become great among God’s people experience much pain and difficulty in God’s training process.

*3. (11-12) David’s palace and greatness.*

**Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons. And they built David a house. So David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted His kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.**

a. **They built David a house:** This showed David’s influence and importance. Neighboring kings honored

him with the finest craftsmen and wood to build a palace. This relationship with **Hiram king of Tyre** also showed that David was more than a man of war. He knew how to build important political alliances.

b. **So David knew**: David knew three things that made his reign great. Every godly leader should know these three things well.

- **David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel**: David knew that God called him and established him over Israel.

- **He had exalted His kingdom**: David knew that the kingdom belonged to God - it was **His kingdom**.

- **For the sake of His people Israel**: David knew God wanted to use him as a channel to bless His people. It was not for David's sake that he was lifted up, but for the **sake of His people Israel**.

#### 4. (13-16) *David's many wives.*

**And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron. Also more sons and daughters were born to David. Now these are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.**

a. **David took more concubines and wives**: This was in direct disobedience to Deu 17:17 : *Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away.*

b. **More sons and daughters were born to David**: Certainly David (and everyone else) saw these many children as God's sign of blessing upon David and his many marriages. Yet most of the trouble to come in David's life came from his relationships with women and problems with his children.

- i. It is often true that the seeds to our future trouble are sown in times of great success and prosperity. In some ways, David handled trials better than success.

### **C. David defeats the Philistines.**

#### *1. (17-19) David fights against Israel's old enemies.*

**Now when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. The Philistines also went and deployed themselves in the Valley of Rephaim. So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?" And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand."**

a. **The Philistines also went and deployed themselves:** David's success brought new challenges from the *outside*. As God worked mightily in David's life, the devil also got to work and brought opposition against David.

b. **David inquired of the LORD:** As David sought God and looked to Him for guidance, he was blessed. God honored David's dependence on Him and gave him the promise of victory.

#### *2. (20-21) David defeats the Philistines at Baal Perazim.*

**So David went to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there; and he said, "The LORD has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water." Therefore he called the name of that place Baal Perazim. And they left their images there, and David and his men carried them away.**

a. **The LORD has broken through my enemies before me:** At the battle of **Baal Perazim**, David

defeated the Philistines with an overwhelming force, **like a breakthrough of water**.

b. **They left their images there, and David and his men carried them away:** The Philistines brought their idols to the battle, thinking they would help defeat the Israelites. Because David inquired of God and obeyed God, they carried away the Philistine idols.

3. (22-25) *David defeats the Philistines at the Valley of Rephaim.*

**Then the Philistines went up once again and deployed themselves in the Valley of Rephaim. Therefore David inquired of the LORD, and He said, "You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines." And David did so, as the LORD commanded him; and he drove back the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.**

a. **David inquired of the LORD:** After the first victory over the Philistines, David was wise enough to wait on the LORD before the second battle. It is easy for many in the same situation to say, "I've fought this battle before. I know how to win. This will be easy." *David always triumphed when he sought and obeyed God.*

b. **You shall not go up; circle around them:** God directed David differently in this battle. Even against the same enemy, not every battle is the same.

i. In his commentary on this passage, Adam Clarke noted the remarkable guidance of God in David's life and asked a good question. "How is it that such supernatural directions and assistances are not



communicated now? Because they are not asked for; and they are not asked for because they are not expected; and they are not expected because men have not faith; and they have not faith because they are under a refined spirit of atheism, and have no spiritual intercourse with their Maker.” (Clarke)

c. **The LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines:** At the battle of **Rephaim** David waited for the LORD to **strike the camp** of the enemy first. The sign of the LORD’s work was **the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees**.

i. “As the Rabbis have it, and it is a very pretty conceit if it be true, the footsteps of angels walking along the tops of the mulberry trees make them rustle; that was the sign for them to fight, when God’s cherubim were going with them, when they should come, who can walk through the clouds and fly through the air, led by the great Captain himself, walking along the mulberry trees, and so make a rustle by their celestial footsteps.” (Spurgeon)

ii. At the signal that the LORD was at work, David and his troops rushed forward to victory. This principle is true in our every-day walk with God. When we sense that the Lord is at work, we must **advance quickly**, and we will see a great victory won. “We must also, in the spiritual warfare, observe and obey the motions of the Spirit, when he setteth up his standard; for those are the sounds of God’s goings, the footsteps of his anointed.” (Trapp)

iii. There is something wonderful about the King James Version translation of 2Sa 5:24 : *when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself*. When you hear the work of God happening, *bestir*

*thyself* - **advance quickly**. Spurgeon liked to point out that it said *bestir thyself* - often we think we must stir others up. That often just becomes hype and emotionalism. Instead, stir yourself.

iv. When we see the work of God happening around us, it is like the sound in the mulberry trees - the rustling sound should awaken us to prayer and devotion. A time of crisis or tragedy is also like the sound in the mulberry trees - the rustling sound should awaken us to confession and repentance. "Now, what should I do? The first thing I will do is, I will bestir myself. But how shall I do it? Why, I will go home this day, and I will wrestle in prayer more earnestly than I have been wont to do that God will bless the minister, and multiply the church." (Spurgeon)

## **The Ark Brought to Jerusalem**

**2Sa 6:1** Once more David called together the best soldiers in Israel, a total of thirty thousand men,

2Sa 6:2 and led them to Baalah in Judah, in order to bring from there God's Covenant Box, bearing the name of the LORD Almighty, whose throne is above the winged creatures.

2Sa 6:3 They took it from Abinadab's home on the hill and placed it on a new cart. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the cart,

2Sa 6:4 with Ahio walking in front.

## **Uzzah and the Ark**

2Sa 6:5 David and all the Israelites were dancing and singing with all their might to honor the LORD. They were playing harps, lyres, drums, rattles, and cymbals.

2Sa 6:6 As they came to the threshing place of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out and took hold of the

Covenant Box.

2Sa 6:7 At once the LORD God became angry with Uzzah and killed him because of his irreverence. Uzzah died there beside the Covenant Box,

2Sa 6:8 and so that place has been called Perez Uzzah ever since. David was furious because the LORD had punished Uzzah in anger.

2Sa 6:9 Then David was afraid of the LORD and said, "How can I take the Covenant Box with me now?"

2Sa 6:10 So he decided not to take it with him to Jerusalem; instead, he turned off the road and took it to the house of Obed Edom, a native of the city of Gath.

2Sa 6:11 It stayed there three months, and the LORD blessed Obed Edom and his family.

2Sa 6:12 King David heard that because of the Covenant Box the LORD had blessed Obed Edom's family and all that he had; so he got the Covenant Box from Obed's house to take it to Jerusalem with a great celebration.

2Sa 6:13 After the men carrying the Covenant Box had gone six steps, David had them stop while he offered the LORD a sacrifice of a bull and a fattened calf.

2Sa 6:14 David, wearing only a linen cloth around his waist, danced with all his might to honor the LORD.

2Sa 6:15 And so he and all the Israelites took the Covenant Box up to Jerusalem with shouts of joy and the sound of trumpets.

### **David and Michal**

2Sa 6:16 As the Box was being brought into the city, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out of the window and saw King David dancing and jumping around in the sacred dance, and she was disgusted with him.

2Sa 6:17 They brought the Box and put it in its place in the Tent that David had set up for it. Then he offered sacrifices

and fellowship offerings to the LORD.

2Sa 6:18 When he had finished offering the sacrifices, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty

2Sa 6:19 and distributed food to them all. He gave each man and woman in Israel a loaf of bread, a piece of roasted meat, and some raisins. Then everyone went home.

2Sa 6:20 Afterward, when David went home to greet his family, Michal came out to meet him. "The king of Israel made a big name for himself today!" she said. "He exposed himself like a fool in the sight of the servant women of his officials!"

2Sa 6:21 David answered, "I was dancing to honor the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and his family to make me the leader of his people Israel. And I will go on dancing to honor the LORD,

2Sa 6:22 and will disgrace myself even more. You may think I am nothing, but those women will think highly of me!"

2Sa 6:23 Michal, Saul's daughter, never had any children.

## **2 Samuel 6:1-23**

### **2 Samuel 6 - David Brings the Ark of God into Jerusalem**

*Psalms 132 is commonly associated with the events of this chapter.*

#### **A. The failed first attempt.**

*1. (1-2) Bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem.*

**Again David gathered all *the* choice *men* of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who *were* with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD of Hosts, who dwells *between* the cherubim.**

**a. David gathered all the choice men of Israel:**

David gathered so many of his best soldiers because bringing the ark to Jerusalem was an important step towards providing a central place of worship for all of Israel.

**b. To bring up from there the ark of God:** This was the *Ark of the Covenant*, which God commanded Moses to make more than 400 years before David's time. It was a wood box (the word **ark** means "box" or "chest") completely covered with gold and with an ornate gold lid or top known as the *mercy seat*.

i. The **ark of God** was 3 feet 9 inches (1.15 meters) long, 2 feet 3 inches (.68 meter) wide and 2 feet 3 inches (.68 meter) high. In it were the tablets of the law that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that miraculously budded as a confirmation of his leadership.

**c. The LORD of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim:** The **ark of God** represented the immediate presence and glory of God in Israel. David considered it a high priority to bring the ark out of obscurity and back into prominence. David wanted Israel to be alive with a sense of the near presence and glory of God.

i. The last mention of the **ark of God** was when it came back from the land of the Philistines in 1Sa 7:1. It sat at the house of Abinadab for 20 years. David had a great motive - to emphasize the presence and glory of God in Israel.

2. (3-5) *The Ark is brought out with great joy.*

**So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of**

**Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. Then David and all the house of Israel played *music* before the LORD on all kinds of *instruments of* fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals.**

**a. So they set the ark of God on a new cart:**

Transporting the ark on a cart was against God's specific command. The ark was designed to be carried (Exo 25:12-15) and was only to be carried by Levites of the family of Koath (Num 4:15).

i. God wanted the ark to be carried because He wanted nothing mechanical about the ark, representing His presence. "The ark was nothing less than the burden of the Lord, and the burden of the Lord was to be carried on the hearts of the Levites." (Redpath)

ii. We can imagine what these men thought. "Look - we have a **new cart** for the ark of God. God will be very pleased at our fancy **new cart**." They thought that a new technology or luxury could cover over their ignorant disobedience.

iii. "We want God's presence very much, don't we? But we like to hitch His presence to some of our new carts. We like to add Him to our list of organizations, to load Him on top of the mechanics of a busy life, and then drive. How much of our service is really in the energy of the flesh, I wonder! So often we put forth our hands, but not our hearts." (Redpath)

iv. "It is not new things we need, but *new fire*." (John Wesley)

v. The Philistines transported the ark on a cart in 1Sa 6:10-11. They got away with it because they

were Philistines, but God expected more from His people. Israel was to take their example from God's Word, not from the innovations of the Philistines.

**b. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart:** The meaning of the names of these sons of Abinadab paint a meaningful picture. **Uzzah** means "strength" and **Ahio** means "friendly."

i. Much service for the LORD is like this - a new cart, a big production, with *strength* leading and *friendly* out front - yet all done without inquiring of God or looking to His will. Surely David prayed for God's blessing on this big production, but he didn't inquire of God regarding the production itself. This was a good thing done the wrong way.

**c. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD:** Judging from the importance of the occasion and all the instruments mentioned, this was quite a production. The atmosphere was joyful, exciting, and engaging. The problem was that none of it pleased God because it was all in disobedience to His word.

i. We are often tempted to judge a worship experience by how it makes *us* feel. But when we realize that worship is about *pleasing God*, we are driven to His word, so we can know how He wants to be worshipped.

ii. It is hard to receive it in our consumer-oriented culture, but worship *isn't all about what pleases us*. It's all about what pleases God.

3. (6-7) *Uzzah is struck dead for touching the ark.*

**And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of**

**the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his* error; and he died there by the ark of God.**

a. **When they came to Nachon's threshing floor:** At a **threshing floor** the whole stalks of wheat were gathered, and the *chaff* was separated from the *wheat*. There was a lot of *chaff* in this production, and God blew away the chaff at **Nachon's threshing floor**.

b. **Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it:** This was strictly forbidden. Regarding the transporting of the ark Num 4:15 says, *they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die*.

i. Uzzah made a decision in a moment to disregard God's command and to do what seemed right to him. Even decisions made in a moment matter before God.

c. **God struck him there for his error:** God fulfilled the ominous promise of Num 4:15 and **struck** Uzzah. David wanted Israel to know the presence of the LORD and God showed up at **Nachon's threshing floor** - but not in the way anyone wanted.

i. Uzzah's **error** was more than just a reflex action or instinct. God **struck** Uzzah because his action was based upon a critical **error** in thinking.

- Uzzah erred in thinking it didn't matter who carried the ark.

- Uzzah erred in thinking it didn't matter how the ark was carried.

- Uzzah erred in thinking he knew all about the ark because it was in his father's house for so long.

- Uzzah erred in thinking that God couldn't take care of the ark of Himself.



- Uzzah erred in thinking that the ground of Nachon's threshing floor was less holy than his own hand.

- ii. "He saw no difference between the ark and any other valuable article. His intention to help was right enough; but there was a profound insensibility to the awful sacredness of the ark, on which even its Levitical bearers were forbidden to lay hands." (Maclaren)

4. (8-9) *David reacts with anger and fear.*

**And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day. David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"**

a. **David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak:** David's anger was based in confusion. He couldn't understand why his good intentions weren't enough. God cares about both our intentions and actions.

b. **How can the ark of the LORD come to me:** David knew it was important to bring the **ark of the LORD** into the center of Israel's life. He wanted all Israel to be excited about the presence and glory of God. Because of what happened to Uzzah, David felt he couldn't do what God wanted him to do.

- i. David's response in the rest of the chapter shows that he found the answer to his question. He answered the question with the thought later expressed in Isa 8:20 : *To the law and to the testimony!* David found the answer in God's word.

## **B. The successful second attempt.**

1. (10-12a) *David leaves the ark with Obed-Edom.*

**So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. Now it was told King David, saying, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that *belongs* to him, because of the ark of God."**

a. **David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom:** David did this in fulfillment of God's word. **Obed-Edom** was a Levite of the family of Koath (1Ch 26:4). This was the family within the tribe of Levi that God commanded to carry and take care of the ark (Num 4:15).

b. **And the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his household:** When God's Word was obeyed, and His holiness was respected blessing followed. God wanted the ark to be a blessing for Israel, not a curse. We might say that the curse didn't come from God's heart but from man's disobedience.

*2. (12b-15) The ark successfully comes to Jerusalem.*

**So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep. Then David danced before the LORD with all *his* might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.**

a. **So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness:** David was glad to know that the presence and glory of God could bring blessing instead of

a curse. He was also glad to see that when they obeyed God they were blessed.

i. David explained to the priests why God struck out against them in their first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem in 1Ch 15:13 : *For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.*

ii. When the worship was in *the proper order* it was still filled **with gladness** and joy. It is a mistake to feel that “real” worship must be subdued, solemn, or only in a minor key.

**b. When those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep:** This was elaborate, excessive, over-the-top sacrifice. This excess of sacrifice communicated *atonement, consecration, and longing for fellowship.*

i. 1Ch 15:11-15 shows us that David specifically commanded the priests to carry the ark the right way - on their shoulders. We often think that a “new cart” or “strength” or a “friendly” manner is the way to bring the presence and glory of God. But God always wants His presence and glory to come on the shoulders of consecrated, obedient, praising men and women.

ii. It also showed that David brought the ark to Jerusalem with a big production - bigger than the first attempt. David was wise enough to know that the problem with the first attempt wasn’t that it was a big production, but that it was a big production that came from man and not God.

**c. David danced before the LORD with all his might:** David didn’t hold back anything in his own

expression of worship. He didn't dance out of obligation but out of heartfelt worship. He was glad to bring the **ark of the LORD** into Jerusalem according to God's word.

i. This expression of David's heart showed that he had a genuine *emotional link* to God. There are two great errors in this area - the error of making emotions the center of our Christian life and the error of an emotionally detached Christian life. In the Christian life, emotions must not be manipulated, and they must not be repressed.

ii. We don't think that dancing is strange when the baseball player rounds the bases after the game winning home run. We don't think it is strange when the winning touchdown is scored or when our own child scores a goal. We think nothing at hands raised at a concert or a touchdown. We should not think them strange in worship to God.

d. **David was wearing a linen ephod**: It is a mistake to think that David was immodest. 1Ch 15:27 indicates that David was dressed just like all the other priests and Levites in this procession.

i. From our knowledge of ancient and modern culture, we can surmise that David's dance wasn't a solo performance. He probably danced with simple rhythmic steps together with other men in the way one might see Orthodox Jewish men today dance. In this context, David's **linen ephod** means he set aside his royal robes and dressed just like everyone else in the procession.

ii. We might also point out that David's dancing was appropriate in the context. This was a parade with a marching band, a grand procession. David's dancing fit right in. If David did this as the nation gathered on

the Day of Atonement, it would be out of context and wrong.

*3. (16-19) David brings everyone present into the worship experience and the fellowship meal.*

**Now as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. So they brought the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. And when David had finished offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. Then he distributed among all the people, among the whole multitude of Israel, both the women and the men, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins. So all the people departed, everyone to his house.**

a. **She despised him in her heart:** David's wife Michal didn't appreciate David's exuberant worship. She felt it wasn't dignified for the King of Israel to express his emotions before God.

i. "No doubt, there are particularly nice and dainty people who will censure God's chosen if they live wholly to his praise, and they will call them eccentric, old-fashioned, obstinate, absurd, and I don't know what besides. From the window of their superiority they look down upon us." (Spurgeon)

b. **They brought the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle:** After many years - since the ark was lost in battle - the ark was returned to the **tabernacle** and set in the most holy

place. The emblem of God's presence and glory was set at its proper place in Israel.

c. **Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD:** The **burnt offerings** spoke of *consecration*. The **peace offerings** spoke of *fellowship*. This was a day of great consecration and fellowship with God. It was also a great barbeque.

#### 4. (20) *Michal's complaint.*

**Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"**

a. **David returned to bless his household:** After this day of great victory David came home to bring a blessing to his whole family.

b. **How glorious was the king of Israel today:** With biting sarcasm, Michal's criticism could have ruined this whole day for David. He might have expected such an attack after such a remarkable day of victory. "Pirates look out for loaded vessels." (Spurgeon)

c. **Uncovering himself today:** Michal seemed to indicate that she didn't object to David's dancing, but to what David wore when he set aside his royal robes and danced as a man just like the other men celebrating in the procession. David acted as if he were just another worshipper in Israel.

#### 5. (21-23) *David's rebuke of Michal.*

**So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play *music* before**

**the LORD. And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor.” Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.**

a. **It was before the LORD:** David didn’t let Michal’s sarcastic criticism ruin his day. He simply explained the truth: “I did it for God, not for you.”

i. This is not a justification for everything in the context of worship. When David considered the context of the procession and the whole setting, his conscience was clear. He knew his dancing wasn’t inappropriate to the setting or context. Someone who acts inappropriately to the setting or context of a meeting can’t simply justify it by saying, “**It was before the LORD.**”

b. **To appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD:** “David did not say, ‘Over my people’: he acknowledged that they were not his people, but Jehovah’s people. He was only lieutenant-governor; the Lord was still the great King of Israel.” (Spurgeon)

c. **And will be humble in my own sight:** What David did was *humbling* to him. He didn’t dance to show others how spiritual he was.

i. “David would more and more abase himself before the Lord. He felt that whatever Michal’s opinion of him might be, it could not be more humbling than his own view of himself. Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be.” (Spurgeon)

d. **Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death:** Michal’s barrenness

was not necessarily the result of Divine judgment. It may be that David never had marital relations with her again. Nevertheless, the principle stands: there is often barrenness in the life and ministry of the overly critical.

### **The Lord's Covenant with David**

**2Sa 7:1** King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD kept him safe from all his enemies.

2Sa 7:2 Then the king said to the prophet Nathan, "Here I am living in a house built of cedar, but God's Covenant Box is kept in a tent!"

2Sa 7:3 Nathan answered, "Do whatever you have in mind, because the LORD is with you."

2Sa 7:4 But that night the LORD said to Nathan,

2Sa 7:5 "Go and tell my servant David that I say to him, 'You are not the one to build a temple for me to live in.

2Sa 7:6 From the time I rescued the people of Israel from Egypt until now, I have never lived in a temple; I have traveled around living in a tent.

2Sa 7:7 In all my traveling with the people of Israel I never asked any of the leaders that I appointed why they had not built me a temple made of cedar.'

2Sa 7:8 "So tell my servant David that I, the LORD Almighty, say to him, 'I took you from looking after sheep in the fields and made you the ruler of my people Israel.

2Sa 7:9 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have defeated all your enemies as you advanced. I will make you as famous as the greatest leaders in the world.

2Sa 7:10 (10-11) I have chosen a place for my people Israel and have settled them there, where they will live without being oppressed any more. Ever since they entered this land, they have been attacked by violent people, but this will not happen again. I promise to keep you safe from all your enemies and to give you descendants.



2Sa 7:12 When you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will make one of your sons king and will keep his kingdom strong.

2Sa 7:13 He will be the one to build a temple for me, and I will make sure that his dynasty continues forever.

2Sa 7:14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him as a father punishes his son.

2Sa 7:15 But I will not withdraw my support from him as I did from Saul, whom I removed so that you could be king.

2Sa 7:16 You will always have descendants, and I will make your kingdom last forever. Your dynasty will never end.' "

2Sa 7:17 Nathan told David everything that God had revealed to him.

### **David's Prayer of Gratitude**

2Sa 7:18 Then King David went into the Tent of the LORD's presence, sat down and prayed, "Sovereign LORD, I am not worthy of what you have already done for me, nor is my family.

2Sa 7:19 Yet now you are doing even more, Sovereign LORD; you have made promises about my descendants in the years to come. And you let a man see this, Sovereign LORD!

2Sa 7:20 What more can I say to you! You know me, your servant.

2Sa 7:21 It was your will and purpose to do this; you have done all these great things in order to instruct me.

2Sa 7:22 How great you are, Sovereign LORD! There is none like you; we have always known that you alone are God.

2Sa 7:23 There is no other nation on earth like Israel, whom you rescued from slavery to make them your own people. The great and wonderful things you did for them

have spread your fame throughout the world. You drove out other nations and their gods as your people advanced, the people whom you set free from Egypt to be your own.

2Sa 7:24 You have made Israel your own people forever, and you, LORD, have become their God.

2Sa 7:25 "And now, LORD God, fulfill for all time the promise you made about me and my descendants, and do what you said you would.

2Sa 7:26 Your fame will be great, and people will forever say, 'The LORD Almighty is God over Israel.' And you will preserve my dynasty for all time.

2Sa 7:27 LORD Almighty, God of Israel! I have the courage to pray this prayer to you, because you have revealed all this to me, your servant, and have told me that you will make my descendants kings.

2Sa 7:28 "And now, Sovereign LORD, you are God; you always keep your promises, and you have made this wonderful promise to me.

2Sa 7:29 I ask you to bless my descendants so that they will continue to enjoy your favor. You, Sovereign LORD, have promised this, and your blessing will rest on my descendants forever."

## **2 Samuel 7:1-29**

### **2 Samuel 7 - God's Covenant with David**

#### **A. David proposes to build God a permanent house.**

*1. (1-3) Nathan's premature advice to David.*

**Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains." Then**

**Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that *is* in your heart, for the LORD *is* with you."**

a. **The LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around:** This leads us to believe that the events of 2 Samuel 7 happened after the wars of conquest described in 2 Samuel 8. This section is placed before the war accounts in the text to show its greater importance.

b. **I dwell in a house of cedar:** Cedar wood was especially valued. This meant that David lived in an expensive, beautiful home. When he remembered that **the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains**, the contrast bothered him. David was troubled by the thought that he lived in a nicer house than the ark of the covenant.

i. **A house of cedar:** "It was a remarkable contrast to the shelter of Adullam's cave." (Meyer)

ii. Without saying the specific words, David told Nathan that he wanted to build a *temple* to replace the *tabernacle*. When Israel was in the wilderness more than 400 years before this, God commanded Moses to build a tent of meeting according to a specific pattern (Exo 25:8-9). God never asked for a permanent building to replace the tent, but now David wanted to do this for God.

iii. The tent of meeting - also known as the tabernacle - was perfectly suited to Israel in the wilderness because they constantly moved. Now that Israel was securely in the land and the ark of the covenant was in Jerusalem (2Sa 6:17), David thought it would be better and more appropriate to build a temple to replace the tabernacle.

c. **Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you:** Nathan said this to David because it seemed good and reasonable. What could be wrong with David building a temple?

- i. **All that is in your heart** shows that David's heart was filled with this question: "What can I do for God?" He was so filled with gratitude and concern for God's glory that he wanted to do something special for God.

2. (4-7) *God's response to David's offer.*

**But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"**

- a. **That night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan:** Nathan's response to David was presumptuous. He answered according to human judgment and common sense, but before he heard the **word of the LORD**.

- i. "It is of the utmost importance that we should ever test our desires, even the highest and holiest of them, by His will. Work, excellent in itself, should never be undertaken, save at the express command of God. The passing of time will always vindicate the wisdom of the Divine will." (Morgan)

- b. **Would you build a house for Me to dwell in:** God seemed honored and "surprised" that David offered to build Him a house. It was as if God said to David, "You want to build Me a house? No one ever offered to do that before, and I never commanded anyone to do it."

i. David wanted to do more than God commanded. This is a wonderful place to be in our relationship with God. Most of us are so stuck in the thinking, "How little can I do and still please the LORD?" that we never really want to do *more* than God commands.

ii. "Though the Lord refused to David the realization of his wish, he did it in a most gracious manner. He did not put the idea away from him in anger or disdain, as though David had cherished an unworthy desire; but he honored his servant even in the non-acceptance of his offer." (Spurgeon)

c. **Would you build a house:** David now learned that God didn't want him to build the temple, but David didn't respond by doing *nothing*. According to 1Ch 29:2-9, David gathered all the materials for building the temple so that Solomon could build a glorious house for God.

i. "If you cannot have what you hoped, do not sit down in despair and allow the energies of your life to run to waste; but arise, and gird yourself to help others to achieve. If you may not build, you may gather materials for him that shall. If you may not go down the mine, you can hold the ropes." (Meyer)

## **B. God proposes to build David a permanent house.**

1. (8-9) *God reminds David what He has done for him.*

**"Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who *are* on the earth."'"**

- a. **I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people:** God took David from the pasture to the throne.
- b. **I have been with you wherever you have gone:** God protected David from all his enemies.
- c. **Have made you a great name:** God made David's name great in all the earth.

2. (10-11) *God promises two things to David.*

**"Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges *to be over* My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house."**

- a. **I will appoint a place for My people Israel:** God promised David that under his reign, He would establish a permanent and secure Israel. God promised this first because He knew that David, being a godly shepherd, was first concerned about the welfare of his people.
- b. **He will make you a house:** God promised David that He would build *him* a house in the sense of establishing a dynasty for the house of David. This was an enduring legacy for David long after his death.
  - i. David wanted to build God a temple. God said, "Thank you David, but no thanks. Let Me build you a **house** instead." This was a greater promise than David's offer to God, because David's "house" (dynasty) would last longer and be more glorious than the temple David wanted to build.
  - ii. God honored what David gave Him, even though he only gave it to God in his sincere intention. There are

some things that we *want* to give God but are prevented from giving. In these cases, God receives the *intention* as the *gift*.

iii. God said “No” to David’s offer because David was a man of war, and God wanted a man of peace to build His temple. 1Ch 22:8-10 explains this: *But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight... a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest... He shall be build a house for My name.*

iv. The explanation to David recorded in 1Ch 22:8 came years afterwards. We can surmise that for many years David did not know the exact reason why God didn’t want him to build the temple. “It would have wounded David needlessly to have been told this at the time... Meanwhile David possessed his soul in patience, and said to himself, ‘God has a reason; I cannot understand it, but it is well.’” (Meyer)

3. (12-17) *God details His promise of a house for David.*

**“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”** According to all



**these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.**

a. **I will set up your seed after you:** In this, God specifically promised a hereditary monarchy for the house of David. It was important for God to repeat this promise specifically because there had never yet been a king succeeded by his son in Israel.

i. "The family of Saul became *totally extinct*; the family of David remained till the incarnation." (Clarke)

ii. This great promise that God made to David had only a *future* fulfillment. David would only benefit *in his day* from the promise through faith. If David had a "what's-in-it-for-me-right-now" attitude, the promise would mean nothing to him.

iii. "The joy which filled David's bosom was a spiritual one, because he knew that Jesus would come of his race, and that an everlasting kingdom would be set up in his person, and in him should the Gentiles trust." (Spurgeon)

b. **He shall build a house for My name:** Though David would not build a temple for God, David's descendent would.

c. **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever:** The family of David did rule over Israel for more than four centuries but was eventually removed because of evil added upon evil. Yet out of the "stump" of Jesse, God raised up a new branch that will reign for ever and ever (Isa 11:1-2).

d. **I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him:** This descendent of David will enjoy a special relationship with God. If he sins, God will not reject him. Instead, God will **chasten** him without rejecting him.

e. **Your throne shall be established forever:** God promised David that the reign of his dynasty would last forever.

i. Each of these great promises was *partially* fulfilled in Solomon, David's son and successor to his throne.

- Solomon ruled on David's throne.
- God's mercies never departed from Solomon, though he sinned.
- Solomon built God a magnificent house.

ii. But the prophets foretold a greater fulfillment of these promises.

- *Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute righteousness in the earth. . . Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jer 23:5-6)*

- *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. . . Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it... from that time forward, even forever. (Isa 9:6-7)*

- *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (Luk 1:31-33)*

iii. God's promise of a house for David is completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

- Jesus does reign and will reign on David's throne forever.
- The Father's mercies never departed from Jesus, even when He was made sin for us.
- Jesus is building the Father a magnificent house (Heb 3:3-6) in the sense that we are God's temple (1Pe 2:5) and the church is God's new house.

### **C. David's prayer of thanksgiving.**

*1. (18-24) He humbly glorifies God for His goodness.*

**Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: "Who *am* I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. *Is* this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant. For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know *them*. Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For *there is* none like You, nor *is there any* God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who *is* like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name—and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land—before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods? For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God."**

**a. Who am I, O Lord GOD?... Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD:** When David received this

spectacular gift, he didn't think it made *him* any greater. In David's eyes it made *God* greater.

i. David's attitude wasn't, "I am so great that even God's gives me gifts." His attitude was, "God is so great that He gives even me gifts." We should receive salvation and every blessing with the same attitude. God's giving reflects the greatness of the Giver, not the receiver.

b. **Your servant:** David's humble reception of this gift is shown by the repetition of the phrase **Your servant** - ten times in this prayer.

i. It shows that David humbly accepted God's "no" when he wanted to build the temple. "There are some professors who would do a great thing if they might, but if they are not permitted to act a shining part they are in the sulks and angry with their God. David when his proposal was set aside found it in his heart not to murmur, but to pray." (Spurgeon)

2. (25-29) *David boldly asks that the promise be fulfilled as spoken.*

**"Now, O LORD God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish *it* forever and do as You have said. So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, 'The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel.' And let the house of Your servant David be established before You. For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed *this* to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You. And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant. Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You; for**

**You, O Lord GOD, have spoken *it*, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever."**

a. **Establish it forever and do as You have said:**

David's prayer boldly asked God to *do* what He *promised*. This wasn't *passive* prayer that said, "Well God, do whatever You want to do - I don't really care one way or another." This wasn't *arrogant* prayer that said, "Well God, let me tell You what to do." This was *bold* prayer that said, "God, here is Your promise - now I trust You to fulfill it grandly and to be faithful to Your word."

i. The phrase "**therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You**" emphasizes this. David said, "I'm only praying because You promised. You told me that this is what You want to do."

ii. "God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money, and I take it and use it. But oh I my friend, do try and use God's promises; nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, 'Lord, do as thou hast said.' And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use his promises." (Spurgeon)

iii. This kind of prayer *appropriates* God's promise. Just because God promised doesn't mean that we possess. Through believing prayer like this, God promises, and we appropriate. If we don't appropriate in faith, God's promise is left unclaimed.

- We may appropriate His promise for forgiveness: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1Jn 1:9)

- We may appropriate His promise for peace: *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you: not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* (Joh 14:27)
- We may appropriate His promise for guidance: *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go: I will guide you with My eye.* (Psa 32:8)
- We may appropriate His promise for growth: *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.* (Php 1:6)
- We may appropriate His promise for help: *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace of help in time of need.* (Heb 4:16)

**b. Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You:** Notice that David prayed from the **heart**. Some people pray from a book; others pray from their head. The right place to pray from is the **heart**.

i. It also says that David came before God to **pray this prayer**. Some prayers are not *prayed*. They are said or read or thought, but not *prayed*. "Not to say this prayer, but to pray this prayer. There is great force in the expression. Some prayers are never prayed, but are like arrows which are never shot from the bow. Scarcely may I call them prayers, for they are such as to form, and matter, and verbiage, but they are said, not prayed. The praying of prayer is the main matter." (Spurgeon)

**c. You are God, and Your words are true:** This was David's foundation of faith. He knew that God was **God**, and that every word of His was **true**. He knew that God can be trusted.

i. "The great sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of very lightly and in a very trifling spirit, as though it were scarcely any sin at all; yet, according to my text, and, indeed, according to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, unbelief is the giving of God the lie, and what can be worse?" (Spurgeon)

## **David's Victories**

**2Sa 8:1** Some time later King David attacked the Philistines again, defeated them, and ended their control over the land.

2Sa 8:2 Then he defeated the Moabites. He made the prisoners lie down on the ground and put two out of every three of them to death. So the Moabites became his subjects and paid taxes to him.

2Sa 8:3 Then he defeated the king of the Syrian state of Zobah, Hadadezer son of Rehob, as Hadadezer was on his way to restore his control over the territory by the upper Euphrates River.

2Sa 8:4 David captured seventeen hundred of his cavalry and twenty thousand of his foot soldiers. He kept enough horses for a hundred chariots and crippled all the rest.

2Sa 8:5 When the Syrians of Damascus sent an army to help King Hadadezer, David attacked it and killed twenty-two thousand men.

2Sa 8:6 Then he set up military camps in their territory, and they became his subjects and paid taxes to him. The LORD made David victorious everywhere.

2Sa 8:7 David captured the gold shields carried by Hadadezer's officials and took them to Jerusalem.

2Sa 8:8 He also took a great quantity of bronze from Betah and Berothai, cities ruled by Hadadezer.

2Sa 8:9 King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated all of Hadadezer's army.

2Sa 8:10 So he sent his son Joram to greet King David and congratulate him for his victory over Hadadezer, against whom Toi had fought many times. Joram took David presents made of gold, silver, and bronze.

2Sa 8:11 King David dedicated them for use in worship, along with the silver and gold he took from the nations he had conquered—

2Sa 8:12 Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Amalek—as well as part of the loot he had taken from Hadadezer.

2Sa 8:13 David became even more famous when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Edomites in Salt Valley.

2Sa 8:14 He set up military camps throughout Edom, and the people there became his subjects. The LORD made David victorious everywhere.

### **David's Officials**

2Sa 8:15 David ruled over all of Israel and made sure that his people were always treated fairly and justly.

2Sa 8:16 Joab, whose mother was Zeruah, was the commander of the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was in charge of the records;

2Sa 8:17 Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was the court secretary;

2Sa 8:18 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in charge of David's bodyguards; and David's sons were priests.

## **2 Samuel 8:1-18**

### **2 Samuel 8 - The Wars of David**

#### **A. David's many wars.**

1. (1) *David subdues the Philistines.*



**After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. And David took Metheg Ammah from the hand of the Philistines.**

a. **David attacked the Philistines and subdued them:** The Philistines had troubled Israel for centuries, and they often dominated the people of God. In the reign of David, he both **attacked** and **subdued** these troublesome enemies.

i. David didn't avoid fighting the Philistines because Israel had lost to them so many times before. "The thing that fascinates me about this complete victory is the utter contempt with which David treated the great power of his adversaries." (Redpath)

b. **David took Metheg Ammah:** This was another name for the famous Philistine city of Gath (compare 1Ch 18:1). When David became king, the Philistines were *taking* territory from God's people. Under his leadership God's people began to take territory from the enemy.

*2. (2) The Moabites put under tribute.*

**Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line. With two lines he measured off those to be put to death, and with one full line those to be kept alive. So the Moabites became David's servants, and brought tribute.**

a. **He defeated Moab:** David's war against Moab and his harsh treatment of their army seemed out of place considering that David's great-grandmother was a Moabite (Ruth) and that he entrusted his mother and father into the care of the Moabites (1Sa 22:3-4). It may be that the Moabites killed or mistreated David's parents.

b. **Brought tribute:** God did not want Israel to *destroy* every neighbor nation. Generally, God wanted Israel to be so blessed and strong that other nations were “taxed” by Israel, thus recognizing their strength and dominance.

3. (3-8) *David conquers a Syrian alliance.*

**David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates. David took from him one thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except that he spared *enough* of them for one hundred chariots. When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians. Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David’s servants, *and* brought tribute. The LORD preserved David wherever he went. And David took the shields of gold that had belonged to the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. Also from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze.**

a. **As he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates:** The king of **Zobah** (a Syrian kingdom) ran into David on his way to capture territory to the Euphrates. David’s dominance extended all the way to the Euphrates River.

i. “The border of Israel was carried to the line of the Euphrates, so that promise made by God to Abraham was fulfilled: ‘Unto thy seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.’” (Meyer)

ii. “Then there was Syria, the great heathen nation to the north, divided into two groups with capitals at

Zobah and Damascus. They united together for protection but found themselves helpless against the might of David.” (Redpath)

b. **David hamstrung all the chariot horses:** This was military necessity instead of mere animal cruelty. David could not care for so many horses while on military campaign and he could not give them back to the enemy.

c. **He spared enough of them for one hundred chariots:** That David kept such a small number shows remarkable self-control and trust in God. David obeyed the principle of Deu 17:15-16 and absolutely refused to trust in horses as military weapons. His trust was in God instead (Psa 20:7; Psa 33:16-17).

d. **David took the shields of gold that had belonged to the servants of Hadadezer:** David took what was the glory of the enemy and transformed them into trophies of the power and goodness of God. Those **shields of gold** were set in the temple and testified to God’s work in and through David.

i. God loves to take people and things that are “trophies” for the Devil and make them trophies to His power and grace.

#### *4. (9-14) The glory of David’s kingdom.*

**When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer, then Toi sent Joram his son to King David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi); and Joram brought with him articles of silver, articles of gold, and articles of bronze. King David also dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued—from Syria, from**

**Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, from Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah. And David made *himself* a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt. He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David wherever he went.**

**a. Toi sent Joram his son to King David, to greet him and bless him:** Neighboring nations saw the hand of God on David and brought him honor and gifts. They knew that a strong, godly leader of Israel was good for the whole community of nations, not just good for Israel itself.

i. Not every pagan nation surrounding Israel was hostile to Israel or their God, and David did not treat them as if they were hostile. We make a mistake if we treat every unbeliever as an openly hostile enemy of the LORD.

**b. King David also dedicated these to the LORD:** When David received this acclaim from the nations he **dedicated** it all to the LORD. He knew that the praise and glory belonged to God, not himself. David could handle success as well as apparent failure.

**c. From Syria, from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, from Amalek:** By citing these subdued nations we learn that David's victories were complete. God used David to lead Israel to victory over enemies in every direction.

i. Israel possessed more of the land God promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21) under David's reign than at any other time.

ii. David was able to accomplish so much against God's enemies because he, unlike Saul, was not consumed with fighting against the people of God.

**d. The LORD preserved David wherever he went:**

This is the summary of this whole chapter. Every victory and every enemy subdued was a testimony to the LORD's preserving power in the life and reign of David.

**B. David's administration.**

*1. (15) A general description of David's government.*

**So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and justice to all his people.**

a. **So David reigned:** This chapter of victory, blessing, and prosperity describes the national life of Israel during the reign of David. This is one reason why he is generally regarded as the greatest king or ruler Israel ever had.

i. This is how God wanted to reign in the life of Saul, but Saul resisted the LORD and rejected His Spirit. Because David allowed God to subdue Him, the nations were subdued before David.

b. **David administered judgment and justice to all his people:** This shows that David was a great king to his own people, not only against neighboring nations. He fulfilled what is the fundamental duty of government - to administer **judgment and justice** (Rom 13:1-7).

*2. (16-18) Key people in David's government.*

**Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests; Seraiah was the scribe; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers.**

a. **Joab... Jehoshaphat... Zadok... Ahimelech... Seraiah... Benaiah:** No great ruler succeeds by himself.

Only the smallest organizations are governed well without a gifted and committed team. Part of David's success as a ruler was found in his ability to assemble, train, empower, and maintain such a team.

i. We never find such a list regarding the organization of King Saul's government. This is because David's government had much more form and structure than Saul's.

ii. There is a limit to what we can be and what we can do for the LORD without order and organization. It isn't that order and organization are requirements for progress in the Christian life; they *are* progress in the Christian life, helping us become more like the LORD.

iii. *Nothing* is accomplished in God's kingdom without working through order and organization. While it may *seem* so, it is only an illusion. Behind the scenes God is moving with utmost order and organization though sometimes we cannot see it.

b. **The Cherethites and Pelethites:** These were hired soldiers from Crete. "By employing foreign guards to ensure the safety of the king David would minimize the possibility of becoming the victim of inter-tribal rivalries; these men from Crete could give whole-hearted allegiance to him." (Baldwin)

### **David's Kindness to Mephibosheth**

**2Sa 9:1** One day David asked, "Is there anyone left of Saul's family? If there is, I would like to show him kindness for Jonathan's sake."

2Sa 9:2 There was a servant of Saul's family named Ziba, and he was told to go to David. "Are you Ziba?" the king asked. "At your service, sir," he answered.

2Sa 9:3 The king asked him, "Is there anyone left of Saul's family to whom I can show loyalty and kindness, as I promised God I would?" Ziba answered, "There is still one of Jonathan's sons. He is crippled."

2Sa 9:4 "Where is he?" the king asked. "At the home of Machir son of Ammiel in Lodebar," Ziba answered.

2Sa 9:5 So King David sent for him.

2Sa 9:6 When Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul, arrived, he bowed down before David in respect. David said, "Mephibosheth," and he answered, "At your service, sir."

2Sa 9:7 "Don't be afraid," David replied. "I will be kind to you for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will give you back all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always be welcome at my table."

2Sa 9:8 Mephibosheth bowed again and said, "I am no better than a dead dog, sir! Why should you be so good to me?"

2Sa 9:9 Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said, "I am giving Mephibosheth, your master's grandson, everything that belonged to Saul and his family.

2Sa 9:10 You, your sons, and your servants will farm the land for your master Saul's family and bring in the harvest, to provide food for them. But Mephibosheth himself will always be a guest at my table." (Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)

2Sa 9:11 Ziba answered, "I will do everything Your Majesty commands." So Mephibosheth ate at the king's table, just like one of the king's sons.

2Sa 9:12 Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. All the members of Ziba's family became servants of Mephibosheth.

2Sa 9:13 So Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet, lived in Jerusalem, eating all his meals at the king's table.

## 2 Samuel 9:1-13

### 2 Samuel 9 - David's Kindness to Mephibosheth

#### A. David's kind heart towards the house of Saul.

1. (1) *David's kind question.*

**Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"**

a. **Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul:** In 1 Samuel 7 David asked, "What can I do for God?" and he proposed to build a temple for the Lord. Now David asked another question we should each ask: "What can I do for others?"

i. David's question showed a great love because Saul made himself an enemy of David. It was customary in those days for the king of a new dynasty to completely massacre anyone connected with the prior dynasty. David went against the principle of revenge and against the principle of self-preservation and asked what he could do for the family of *his enemy*.

b. **That I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake:** David did this because he remembered his relationship and covenant with Jonathan (1Sa 20:14-15). His actions were not only based on feelings, but also on the promise of a covenant.

2. (2-4) *Ziba, a former servant of Saul, tells David about Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan.*

**And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "At your service!" Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king,**



**“There is still a son of Jonathan *who is* lame in *his* feet.” So the king said to him, “Where *is* he?” And Ziba said to the king, “Indeed he *is* in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar.”**

a. **Ziba:** David could only learn that there *was* a descendant of Saul still living and could only learn *where* he was through this servant named **Ziba**. This meant that Mephibosheth was in hiding.

b. **The kindness of God:** This phrase is key to understanding David’s motivation in this chapter. David wanted to show someone else the same kindness God showed to him.

c. **There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet:** We first learned of Mephibosheth in 2Sa 4:4. It tells us that this son of Jonathan was made **lame in his feet** from an accident when they heard that his father Jonathan and his grandfather Saul died in battle.

i. We should remember *why* Mephibosheth’s nurse gathered the boy and fled in haste at the news of Saul and Jonathan’s death. She rightly feared that the leader of a new royal dynasty would execute every potential heir of the former dynasty (2Sa 4:4).

d. **A son of Jonathan:** This means that according to the prior dynasty of Saul, Mephibosheth had the right to the throne. He was a son of the first-born son of the king, and other potential heirs were dead. In a political sense David could see Mephibosheth as a rival or a threat.

i. Later in 2Sa 16:5-8 we see a man named Shimei who was a partisan for the house of Saul against David. There were at least a few in Israel who felt that the house of Saul should still reign over the nation and that David shouldn’t be king.

Mephibosheth might draw upon these partisans and develop a rival following.

ii. Ishbosheth was Mephibosheth's uncle, and he waged a bloody war against David for the throne of Israel. There was at least an outside chance that Mephibosheth might do the same.

**e. He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel:**

This speaks of Mephibosheth's low station in life. He didn't even have his own house. Instead, he lived in the house of another man.

i. **Machir the son of Ammiel** later showed he was intensely loyal to David. When David's son Absalom led a rebellion against David, Machir supported and helped David at great danger to himself (2Sa 17:27-29).

**B. David's kindness to Mephibosheth.**

*1. (5-6) Mephibosheth makes a humble appearance before David.*

**Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar. Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, "Mephibosheth?" And he answered, "Here is your servant!"**

a. **Then King David sent and brought him out of the house:** Mephibosheth must have been terrified when messengers from David knocked at his door and demanded that he come with them to see the king. In the back of his mind he anticipated the day when David would do as other kings did and massacre every potential rival to his throne.

i. The knock on the door also meant that Mephibosheth was no longer hidden from David. He

felt secure as long as he believed the new king didn't know about him.

**b. He fell on his face and prostrated himself:**

According to the custom of the times, Mephibosheth had a lot to fear from David. Yet his fear of David was not founded in fact, only on assumption.

i. Up to this point Mephibosheth and David never had a relationship, and it was because Mephibosheth wanted it that way. He avoided David out of unfounded fears.

*2. (7-8) David removes the fears of Mephibosheth.*

**So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually." Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?"**

a. **Do not fear:** These words would be cruel or meaningless unless David gave Mephibosheth a *reason* to **not fear**.

b. **I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake:** David made a covenant with Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20, promising to show kindness to the descendents of Jonathan. David gladly made good on his promise, though Jonathan was long dead.

c. **Will restore to you all the land of Saul:** David simply promised Mephibosheth would receive what was his. Mephibosheth knew about these lands all along, but he was afraid to take possession of them because it would expose him before the king. David went against all custom in showing such kindness to an heir of the former dynasty.

d. **And you shall eat bread at my table continually:** This went far beyond giving Mephibosheth what was rightly his. He gave Mephibosheth the honor of a close relationship with the king.

i. A similar promise is given to the followers of Jesus. Jesus told the disciples that they would eat and drink at His table in heaven (Luk 22:30).

e. **What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I:** Mephibosheth didn't feel worthy of such generosity. He considered himself a **dead dog**, meaning a worthless and insignificant person.

i. All the years of hiding from the king and living in fear and poverty made Mephibosheth think of himself as worthless.

### *3. (9-12) David's instructions to Ziba.*

**And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in *the harvest*, that your master's son may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread at my table always."** Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do." **"As for Mephibosheth," said the king, "he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons."** Mephibosheth had a young son whose name *was* Micha. And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants of Mephibosheth.

a. **You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him:** In addition to the land, David gave Mephibosheth servants to work the land. The

food from the land was for Mephibosheth's family, because he now ate at David's table.

b. **He shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons:** Mephibosheth was happy to know that David didn't want to kill him. To have a promise like this was almost unbelievable.

4. (13) *David fulfills his promise to Mephibosheth.*

**So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet.**

a. **Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem:** No longer hiding in fear of the king, this descendant of Saul now lived openly among the people of God.

b. **He ate continually at the king's table:** No longer in poverty and estranged from the king, now he had great privilege before the king.

c. **He was lame in both his feet:** Mephibosheth's weakness did not vanish. His life was far better, but he was still **lame**.

i. David's grace to Mephibosheth is a wonderful picture of God's grace to us. *We are Mephibosheth.*

- We are hiding, poor, weak, lame, and fearful before our King comes to us.
- We are separated from our King because of our wicked ancestors.
- We are separated from our King because of our deliberate actions.
- We separated ourselves from the King because we didn't know him or His love for us.
- Our King sought us out before we sought Him.

- The King's kindness is extended to us for the sake of another.
  - The King's kindness is based on covenant.
  - We must receive the King's kindness in humility.
  - The King returns to us what we lost in hiding from Him.
  - The King returns to us more than what we lost in hiding from Him.
  - We have the privilege of provision at the King's table.
  - We are received as sons at the King's table, with access to the King and fellowship with Him.
  - We receive servants from the King.
  - The King's honor does not immediately take away all our weakness and lameness, but it gives us a favor and standing that overcomes its sting and changes the way we think about ourselves.
- ii. David's grace to Mephibosheth is also a pattern for us in serving and ministering to others. *We are David.*
- We should seek out our enemies and seek to bless them.
  - We should look for the poor, weak, lame, and hidden to bless them.
  - We should bless others when they don't deserve it, and bless them more than they deserve.
  - We should bless others for the sake of someone else.
  - We must show the *kindness of God* to others.

## **David Defeats Ammon and Syria**

**2Sa 10:1** Some time later King Nahash of Ammon died, and his son Hanun became king.

2Sa 10:2 King David said, "I must show loyal friendship to Hanun, as his father Nahash did to me." So David sent messengers to express his sympathy. When they arrived in Ammon,

2Sa 10:3 the Ammonite leaders said to the king, "Do you think that it is in your father's honor that David has sent these men to express sympathy to you? Of course not! He has sent them here as spies to explore the city, so that he can conquer us!"

2Sa 10:4 Hanun seized David's messengers, shaved off one side of their beards, cut off their clothes at the hips, and sent them away.

2Sa 10:5 They were too ashamed to return home. When David heard about what had happened, he sent word for them to stay in Jericho and not return until their beards had grown again.

2Sa 10:6 The Ammonites realized that they had made David their enemy, so they hired twenty thousand Syrian soldiers from Bethrehob and Zobah, twelve thousand men from Tob, and the king of Maacah with a thousand men.

2Sa 10:7 David heard of it and sent Joab against them with the whole army.

2Sa 10:8 The Ammonites marched out and took up their position at the entrance to Rabbah, their capital city, while the others, both the Syrians and the men from Tob and Maacah, took up their position in the open countryside.

2Sa 10:9 Joab saw that the enemy troops would attack him in front and from the rear, so he chose the best of Israel's soldiers and put them in position facing the Syrians.

2Sa 10:10 He placed the rest of his troops under the command of his brother Abishai, who put them in position facing the Ammonites.

2Sa 10:11 Joab said to him, "If you see that the Syrians are defeating me, come and help me, and if the Ammonites are defeating you, I will go and help you.

2Sa 10:12 Be strong and courageous! Let's fight hard for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the LORD's will be done!"

2Sa 10:13 Joab and his men advanced to attack, and the Syrians fled.

2Sa 10:14 When the Ammonites saw the Syrians running away, they fled from Abishai and retreated into the city. Then Joab turned back from fighting the Ammonites and went back to Jerusalem.

2Sa 10:15 The Syrians realized that they had been defeated by the Israelites, and so they called all their troops together.

2Sa 10:16 King Hadadezer sent for the Syrians who were on the east side of the Euphrates River, and they came to Helam under the command of Shobach, commander of the army of King Hadadezer of Zobah.

2Sa 10:17 When David heard of it, he gathered the Israelite troops, crossed the Jordan River, and marched to Helam, where the Syrians took up their position facing him. The fighting began,

2Sa 10:18 and the Israelites drove the Syrian army back. David and his men killed seven hundred Syrian chariot drivers and forty thousand cavalry, and they wounded Shobach, the enemy commander, who died on the battlefield.

2Sa 10:19 When the kings who were subject to Hadadezer realized that they had been defeated by the Israelites, they made peace with them and became their subjects. And the Syrians were afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

## **2 Samuel 10:1-19**



## **2 Samuel 10 - The War with the Ammonites and the Defeat of the Syrians**

### **A. The offense of the Ammonites.**

*1. (1-2) David sends ambassadors to the Ammonites at the passing of their king.*

**It happened after this that the king of the people of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place. Then David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me." So David sent by the hand of his servants to comfort him concerning his father. And David's servants came into the land of the people of Ammon.**

a. **I will show kindness:** David's kindness to Mephibosheth in the previous chapter didn't end his kind works. Here he showed kindness towards a pagan king because he sympathized with the loss of his father.

b. **So David sent by the hand of his servants to comfort him:** David wasn't content to *feel* kindness towards Hanun. He *did* something to bring the grieving man comfort.

*2. (3-5) Hanun, the new king of the Ammonites, treats Israel's ambassadors shamefully.*

**And the princes of the people of Ammon said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you? Has David not *rather* sent his servants to you to search the city, to spy it out, and to overthrow it?" Therefore Hanun took David's servants, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away. When they told David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Wait**

**at Jericho until your beards have grown, and *then* return."**

a. **Do you think that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you:** It's hard to explain why these advisers to Hanun said this to the king of Ammon. It's possible that they genuinely suspected David, or they perhaps used this as a way to appear wise and cunning to King Hanun. It is common for liars to always suspect others of lying.

b. **Hanun took David's servants, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle... and sent them away:** This was a disgraceful insult to these ambassadors from Israel. In that culture, many men would rather die than to have their beard shaved off. This was because a clean-shaven face was the mark of a slave and free men wore beards.

i. "With the value universally set upon the beard by the Hebrews and other Oriental nations, as being man's greatest ornament, the cutting off of one-half of it was the greatest insult that could have been offered to the ambassadors, and through them to David their king." (Keil and Delitzsch)

ii. "The *beard* is held in high respect in the East: the possessor considers it his greatest ornament; often swears by it; and, in matters of great importance, *pledges* it. Nothing can be more secure than a pledge of this kind; its owner will redeem it at the hazard of his life." (Clarke)

iii. To **cut off their garments in the middle** was also an obvious insult and humiliation. "That the shame of their nakedness might appear, and especially that of their circumcision, so derided by the heathen." (Trapp)

iv. To insult the ambassador is to insult the king. It was just as if they had done this to David himself. The same principle is true with King Jesus and His ambassadors. Jesus reminded His disciples: *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.* (Joh 15:18)

c. **Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return:** David didn't use these men as political tools to whip up anger against the Ammonites. He cared more for their own dignity and honor and allowed them to wait before returning to Jerusalem.

3. (6-7) *The Ammonites and Israelites prepare for war.*

**When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, the people of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand foot soldiers; and from the king of Maacah one thousand men, and from Ish-Tob twelve thousand men. Now when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men.**

a. **When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive:** They knew that *they* did this. David didn't reject the Ammonites; they **made themselves repulsive** to Israel.

b. **The people of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians:** This was a common practice in the ancient world. 1Ch 19:6 says that the Ammonites paid 1,000 talents to the Syrians.

c. **When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men:** This is the first mention of David's **mighty men**, calling them the **army of the mighty men**. They formed a glorious fighting force, this army **of the mighty men**.

i. It's important to understand that David was nothing without his mighty men, and they were nothing without him. He was their leader, but a leader is nothing without followers - and David had **an army of the mighty men** to follow him. These men didn't necessarily *start* as mighty men; many were the distressed, indebted, and discontent people who followed David at Adullam Cave (1Sa 22:1-2).

ii. One of these mighty men was Adino the Eznite - famous for killing 800 men at one time (2Sa 23:8). Another was Jashobeam who killed 300 men at one time (1Ch 11:11). Another was Benaiah who killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day and killed a huge Egyptian warrior with his own spear (1Ch 11:22-23).

## **B. Victory for Israel.**

*1. (8-12) Joab divides the army into two groups.*

**Then the people of Ammon came out and put themselves in battle array at the entrance of the gate. And the Syrians of Zoba, Beth Rehob, Ish-Tob, and Maacah were by themselves in the field. When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he chose some of Israel's best and put *them* in battle array against the Syrians. And the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai his brother, that he might set *them* in battle array against the people of Ammon. Then he said, "If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the LORD do *what is* good in His sight."**

a. **Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind:** As the army of the mighty men approached the Ammonite city, they found themselves

surrounded. In front of them were the Ammonites **in battle array at the entrance of the gate**. Behind them were the Syrians **in the field**. It looked bad for the army of Israel.

b. **If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me:** Joab had only one strategy in battle - *attack*. Many generals would consider surrender when surrounded on both sides by the enemy, but not Joab. He called the army to courage and faith and told them to press on.

i. "It is interesting to observe that in his arrangements he made no allowance for the possibility of ultimate defeat in his conflict with Ammon... it does not seem to have occurred to him that the combination might have been too much for both of them." (Morgan)

c. **Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the LORD do what is good in His sight:** This is a great speech by Joab before the battle. He made at least three great points.

i. **Be of good courage, and let us be strong:** Courage and strength are not matters of feeling and circumstance. They are matters of choice, especially when God makes His strength available to us. We can *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (Eph 6:10).

ii. **Let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God:** Joab called them to remember *all they had to lose*. If they lost this battle they would lose both their **people** and their **cities**. This was a battle bigger than themselves, and the army of the mighty men had to remember that.

iii. **And may the LORD do what is good in His sight:** Joab wisely prepared for the battle to the best of his ability and worked hard for the victory. At the same time, he knew that the outcome was ultimately in God's hands.

*2. (13-14) Joab defeats the Syrians, and the Ammonites retreat to the city of Rabbah.*

**So Joab and the people who were with him drew near for the battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. When the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai, and entered the city. So Joab returned from the people of Ammon and went to Jerusalem.**

a. **They fled before him:** It doesn't even say that Joab engaged the Syrians in battle. This mercenary army **fled before** the army of the mighty men because God was with them. God promised this kind of blessing upon an obedient Israel (Deu 28:7).

b. **They also fled before Abishai, and entered the city:** When the Ammonites saw the Syrians retreating, they also retreated. They could no more stand before the army of the mighty men than the Syrians could.

*3. (15-19) David wipes out the Syrian reinforcements.*

**When the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered together. Then Hadadezer sent and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the River, and they came to Helam. And Shobach the commander of Hadadezer's army went before them. When it was told David, he gathered all Israel, crossed over the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in battle array against David and fought with him. Then the Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed seven hundred charioteers**

and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, and struck Shobach the commander of their army, who died there. And when all the kings *who were* servants to Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore.

a. **When the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered together:** The enemies of Israel wouldn't quit after one defeat. They were a persistent enemy and came back to fight again.

b. **When it was told David, he gathered all Israel:** David gathered the rest of the army of Israel to prevent this army of Syrian reinforcements from crushing the army of the mighty men. The result was glorious:

**the Syrians fled before Israel.**

i. The chapter ends with unfinished business at Rabbah. The offending Ammonites were still in their city and Joab returned to Jerusalem. In the Spring King David sent Joab and the army out again to deal with Rabbah as he waited in Jerusalem. While he waited comfortably in Jerusalem he fell into sin with Bathsheba.

ii. Many know about David's sin with Bathsheba, and how it happened when David waited in Jerusalem when he should have led the battle at Rabbah. 2 Samuel 10 shows that God gave David a warning by showing it necessary for him to come out against the Syrians. David *tried* to leave the battle with Joab in 2 Samuel 10, but his army *needed* him and God tried to show him that by blessing when David did go out to battle. 2 Samuel 10 was God's gracious warning that David sadly wasted.

## **David and Bathsheba**

**2Sa 11:1** The following spring, at the time of the year when kings usually go to war, David sent out Joab with his officers and the Israelite army; they defeated the Ammonites and besieged the city of Rabbah. But David himself stayed in Jerusalem.

2Sa 11:2 One day, late in the afternoon, David got up from his nap and went to the palace roof. As he walked around up there, he saw a woman taking a bath in her house. She was very beautiful.

2Sa 11:3 So he sent a messenger to find out who she was, and learned that she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

2Sa 11:4 David sent messengers to get her; they brought her to him and he made love to her. (She had just finished her monthly ritual of purification.) Then she went back home.

2Sa 11:5 Afterward she discovered that she was pregnant and sent a message to David to tell him.

2Sa 11:6 David then sent a message to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent him to David.

2Sa 11:7 When Uriah arrived, David asked him if Joab and the troops were well, and how the fighting was going.

2Sa 11:8 Then he said to Uriah, "Go on home and rest a while." Uriah left, and David had a present sent to his home.

2Sa 11:9 But Uriah did not go home; instead he slept at the palace gate with the king's guards.

2Sa 11:10 When David heard that Uriah had not gone home, he asked him, "You have just returned after a long absence; why didn't you go home?"

2Sa 11:11 Uriah answered, "The men of Israel and Judah are away in battle, and the Covenant Box is with them; my



commander Joab and his officers are camping out in the open. How could I go home, eat and drink, and sleep with my wife? By all that's sacred, I swear that I could never do such a thing!"

2Sa 11:12 So David said, "Then stay here the rest of the day, and tomorrow I'll send you back." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next.

2Sa 11:13 David invited him to supper and got him drunk. But again that night Uriah did not go home; instead he slept on his blanket in the palace guardroom.

2Sa 11:14 The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by Uriah.

2Sa 11:15 He wrote: "Put Uriah in the front line, where the fighting is heaviest, then retreat and let him be killed."

2Sa 11:16 So while Joab was besieging the city, he sent Uriah to a place where he knew the enemy was strong.

2Sa 11:17 The enemy troops came out of the city and fought Joab's forces; some of David's officers were killed, and so was Uriah.

2Sa 11:18 Then Joab sent a report to David telling him about the battle,

2Sa 11:19 and he instructed the messenger, "After you have told the king all about the battle,

2Sa 11:20 he may get angry and ask you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight them? Didn't you realize that they would shoot arrows from the walls?

2Sa 11:21 Don't you remember how Abimelech son of Gideon was killed? It was at Thebez, where a woman threw a millstone down from the wall and killed him. Why, then, did you go so near the wall?' If the king asks you this, tell him, 'Your officer Uriah was also killed.' "

2Sa 11:22 So the messenger went to David and told him what Joab had commanded him to say.

2Sa 11:23 He said, "Our enemies were stronger than we were and came out of the city to fight us in the open, but we drove them back to the city gate.

2Sa 11:24 Then they shot arrows at us from the wall, and some of Your Majesty's officers were killed; your officer Uriah was also killed."

2Sa 11:25 David said to the messenger, "Encourage Joab and tell him not to be upset, since you never can tell who will die in battle. Tell him to launch a stronger attack on the city and capture it."

2Sa 11:26 When Bathsheba heard that her husband had been killed, she mourned for him.

2Sa 11:27 When the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to the palace; she became his wife and bore him a son. But the LORD was not pleased with what David had done.

## **2 Samuel 11:1-27**

### **2 Samuel 11 - David's Adultery and Murder**

*"In the whole of the Old Testament literature there is no chapter more tragic or full of solemn and searching warning than this." (G. Campbell Morgan)*

#### **A. David's adultery.**

*1. (1) David stays home from the war against the Ammonites.*

**It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.**

**a. In the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle:** In that part of the world, wars were not normally fought during the winter months because

rains and cold weather made travel and campaigning difficult. Fighting resumed in the spring.

**b. David sent Joab... But David remained at Jerusalem:** David should have been out at the battle, but he remained behind. In 2 Samuel 10 Joab and the army of the mighty men were preserved against the Syrians and the Ammonites, but they did not win a decisive victory. The decisive victory came when David led the battle at the end of 2 Samuel 10. Both through custom and experience God told David, "You need to be at the battle." **But David remained at Jerusalem.**

i. The principle of Gal 5:16 rings true: *Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*. If David had his attention where God wanted it, he would never put it where God *didn't* want it. "While Joab is busy in laying siege to Rabbah, Satan is to David, and far sooner prevailed." (Trapp)

ii. Nevertheless, it is wrong to think that *this* began the chain of events David followed all the way down to adultery and murder. David showed his disregard to God's plan for marriage many years before when he took more than one wife (1Sa 25:42-43, 2Sa 3:2-5). David's practice of adding wives showed a lack of romantic restraint and an indulgence of his passions. *This* corrupt seed, sown long ago, grew unchecked long enough and would bear bitter fruit.

iii. "As I think of what happened, of this I am sure, that it did not happen all at once. This matter of Bathsheba was simply the climax of something that had been going on in his life for twenty years." (Redpath)

iv. Therefore, staying home from the battle merely provided *opportunity* for the long-standing lack of

romantic restraint and indulgence of passion to display itself.

## 2. (2) *David encounters temptation.*

**Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.**

a. **David arose from his bed and walked on the roof:** The Hebrew verb form of **walked** suggests that David paced back and forth on the roof. He couldn't sleep and was uneasy - uneasy because he wasn't where God wanted him to be.

b. **He saw a woman bathing:** There is little doubt that this woman (later called by the name *Bathsheba*) acted immodestly. Though it was **evening** and apparently the time when most people were asleep, *certainly* she knew that her bath was visible from the roof of the palace. Any immodesty on Bathsheba's part did not excuse David's sin, but she was still responsible for her wrong.

i. We must never be an occasion for sin in others, even in how we dress. Paul's word in 1Ti 2:9 is relevant here: *the women should adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.*

c. **He saw a woman bathing:** David's sin was not in *seeing* Bathsheba. It was unlikely that he expected or planned to see her. David's sin was in *choosing* to keep his eyes on an alluring image after the sight came before his eyes.

i. Christians - men, especially - must learn to never let their eyes (or their mind) *rest* on alluring images except for what "belongs" to them in marriage. Our eyes must "bounce" off alluring images that come into sight.

ii. David's many wives did not satisfy his lust. This was because you can't *satisfy* lusts of the flesh, because they are primarily rebellious assertions of self. It wasn't so much that David wanted Bathsheba; it was that he would not be satisfied with what God gave him.

iii. The principle would be illustrated in an exaggerated way in the life of Solomon, David's son. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. David and Solomon show us that *if one woman isn't enough, 1000 women aren't enough*.

d. **The woman was very beautiful to behold:** Bathsheba's great beauty made the sight tempting. But the real strength of temptation often does not lie in the quality of the tempting object, but in the state of heart and mind of the one being tempted. David was carefully "prepared" to stumble at this very point. Even so, this temptation was not too strong for David, no matter how beautiful Bathsheba was.

i. For example, Joseph was more severely tempted to commit sexual immorality than David was here, but he fled that temptation.

ii. David looked at Bathsheba and said "beauty" but God saw this as *ugly*. The pleasures of sin deceive us like the bait hides the hook. We must call it what God calls it - sin. We want to say "affair" but God says "adultery." We want to say "love" but God says "lust." We want to say "sexy" but God says "sin." We want to say "romantic" but God says "ruin." We want to say "destiny" but God says "destruction."

3. (3) *David pursues the temptation.*

**So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of**

## **Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"**

a. **So David sent and inquired:** David could have ended the temptation by leaving the scene at that time, even after entertaining the temptation for a while. Instead, David put himself into a *more* tempting situation.

b. **Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam:** From this, David learned that the woman came from a notable family. She was from the upper classes. Her father was **Eliam**, one of David's Mighty Men (2Sa 23:34). Her grandfather was Ahithophel - one of David's chief counselors (2Sa 23:34, 2Sa 15:12).

c. **The wife of Uriah the Hittite:** From this, David learned that Bathsheba was married, and the wife of another of David's Mighty Men (2Sa 23:8; 2Sa 23:39). He also learned that this woman's husband was away, because the Mighty Men were away in battle against the Ammonites. This knowledge made the situation far more tempting. David began to think, "I could get away with this."

i. David committed adultery in his heart up on the roof. Now he knows that he has an opportunity to commit adultery in practice. Adultery in the heart and mind is bad; adultery in practice is far worse.

ii. David should have received the news of the woman's identity as a warning. He learned that this woman was related to men close to David. In taking Bathsheba, David sinned against Uriah, Eliam, and Ahithophel - each man was close and important to David.

4. (4) *David embraces the temptation.*

**Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was**

**cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house.**

a. **Then David sent messengers, and took her:** In this the man after God's heart went against his own heart, following through on a lustful impulse. David ignored every warning and way of escape God set before him.

i. "In the expression *he took her, and she came to him* there is no intimation whatever that David brought Bathsheba into his palace through craft or violence, but rather that she came at his request without any hesitation, and offered no resistance to his desires. Consequently Bathsheba is not to be regarded as free from blame." (Keil and Delitzsch)

ii. "We hear nothing of her reluctance, and there is no evidence that she was taken by force." (Clarke)

b. **He lay with her:** David *knew* this was wrong, yet he did it. It's hard to explain David's thinking here because he *wasn't* thinking. He acted on feeling and impulse instead of *thinking*.

i. If David *thought* about all this, he would see the cost was so much greater than he wanted to consider at the time. If David only knew that this illicit pursuit of pleasure would directly or indirectly result in:

- An unwanted pregnancy.
- The murder of a trusted friend.
- A dead baby.
- His daughter raped by his son.
- One son murdered by another son.
- A civil war led by one of his sons.

- A son who imitates David's lack of self-control, leading him and much of Israel away from God.

ii. The same kind of ruin comes of adultery today. We think about all the children who went to bed without daddy at home because of the terrible attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. But far more children go to bed every night without daddy in the house because of adultery.

iii. At this moment David agreed with the world's understanding of the purpose of sex, seeing it primarily as the pursuit of a pleasurable experience. With his many wives, David may have *never* really understood *God's* purpose for sex: to be the "cement" that helps bond together a one-flesh relationship.

c. **She was cleansed from her impurity:** This confirms that Bathsheba had recently had her menstrual period and was not *already* pregnant when David committed adultery with her.

i. It *seemed* like David "got away" with this sin. But he and we could only think that if we believed the sin was something *good* God wanted to keep from David. David did something harmful and destructive to himself and others, and harm and destruction will come of it. Just because David wasn't caught at the moment doesn't mean that he got away with anything.

5. (5) *Bathsheba's message to David.*

**And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I *am* with child."**

a. **And the woman conceived:** David and Bathsheba didn't *plan* on this. They were terrified both at the "problem" of the pregnancy itself and that it meant that their adultery would be found out.



b. **So she sent and told David:** Her message “involved an appeal to him to take the necessary steps to avert the evil consequences of the sin, inasmuch as the law required that both the adulterer and adulteress should be put to death (

Lev 20:10).” (Keil and Delitzsch)

## **B. David murders Uriah.**

1. (6-11) *David attempts to cover his sin.*

**Then David sent to Joab, saying, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. And David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah departed from the king’s house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. So when they told David, saying, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?” And Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.”**

a. **Send me Uriah the Hittite:** When David heard the disastrous news of Bathsheba’s pregnancy, he should have used it as a prompting to repent. Instead, David did what most unrepentant sinners do: he tried to hide his sin. He wanted to draw Uriah back home to have relations with Bathsheba to give a reason for her pregnancy.

i. The whole concept of hiding our sin is deceptive. Our sin is never hidden before God and only hidden with difficulty from our conscience. Our hidden sin hinders our fellowship with God and others and is a barrier to spiritual life and power.

ii. "The real question for us all is: Are we prepared to face sin? Not to discuss someone else's sin, but to face our own." (Redpath)

iii. The answer to hidden sin is confession and repentance. To whom should we confess? The answer is in the question, "Whom have we sinned against?" "If you sin secretly, confess secretly, admitting publicly that you need the victory but keeping details to yourself. If you sin openly confess openly to remove stumbling blocks from those whom you have hindered. If you have sinned spiritually (prayerlessness, lovelessness, and unbelief as well as their offspring, criticism, etc.) then confess to the church that you have been a hindrance." (J. Edwin Orr)

iv. "As soon as ever we are conscious of sin, the right thing is not to begin to reason with the sin, or to wait until we have brought ourselves into a proper state of heart about it, but to go at once and confess the transgression unto the Lord, there and then." (Spurgeon)

**b. David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered:**

This was David's awkward attempt to pretend that nothing happened. David gave every appearance that things were normal when before God nothing was normal or right.

**c. Go down to your house:** "David's design was that he should go and lie with his wife, that the child now

conceived should pass for his, the honour of Bath-sheba be screened, and his own crime concealed. At this time he had no design of the murder of Uriah, nor of taking Bath-sheba to wife." (Clarke)

**d. The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents:** This shows that Uriah had a passion for the glory of God, even though he was a Hittite and not a native Jew.

**e. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife:** This shows Uriah as a man of great integrity. He was a true "team player" who did not want to enjoy the comforts of home as long as his fellow soldiers endured hardship on the field of battle.

i. "David had expected and hoped that Uriah would prove to be like himself; instead he proved to be a man of integrity, whose first loyalty was to the king's interests rather than to his own pleasure." (Baldwin)

*2. (12-13) David's second attempt to cover his sin fails.*

**Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.**

**a. Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart:** David lied to Uriah, knowing that he wanted to get back to the battle front as soon as possible. He hoped that Uriah would treat the coming evening as his last before returning to battle and be with Bathsheba.

**b. When David called him, he ate and drank before him:** David hoped that getting Uriah drunk would weaken his resolve to identify with his fellow troops. Yet

Uriah **did not go down to his house**, refusing to enjoy what his fellow soldiers could not while the battle still raged.

i. Uriah is a good example of how Christians should conduct themselves as fellow-soldiers in the spiritual battle. *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another.* (Rom 12:15-16)

ii. David was drunk with lust when he slept with Bathsheba; he hoped making Uriah drunk with wine would bring the same result.

c. **But he did not go down to his house:** Some commentators believe that Uriah suspected some infidelity in Bathsheba and avoided her out of jealousy. "It is like he smelt something." (Trapp)

3. (14-17) *David sends Uriah to battle with his own death sentence in hand.*

**In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And *some* of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.**

a. **David wrote a letter to Joab:** Meyer imagines Joab saying, "This master of mine can sing psalms with the best; but when he wants a piece of dirty work done, he must come to me."

b. **Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle:** Having failed to cover his sin, David wanted Uriah dead.

Many adulterers secretly wish death would free them to marry the object of their adultery. This is the very heart of murder even if the deed is not done. David had the power to act on his wish.

c. **And sent it by the hand of Uriah:** David trusted the integrity of Uriah so much that he made him the unwitting messenger of his own death sentence.

i. "This was the sum of treachery and villany. He made this most noble man the carrier of letters which prescribed the mode in which he was to be murdered." (Clarke)

d. **That he may be struck down and die:** David commanded Joab to arrange Uriah's death. Though it was hidden by the raging battle, Uriah was murdered just as surely as if David killed him in his own home.

i. "If a child was to be born, Uriah's lips, at least, should not be able to disown it." (Meyer)

ii. "David was better while a servant than when a king; for being a servant, he feared to kill Saul his adversary, but becoming a king, he basely slew his most faithful friend and dutiful subject." (Trapp)

iii. "Though we mourn over David's sin, yet we thank God that it was permitted, for if he had not so fallen he had not been able to help us when we are conscious of transgression. He could not have so minutely described our griefs if he had not felt the same. David lived, in this respect, for others as well as for himself." (Spurgeon)

e. **Uriah the Hittite died also:** Joab did exactly what David commanded. He knew it was wrong but simply followed orders and murdered Uriah at David's order.

i. If not immediately confronted, one sin can take a wretched course. David indulged his sensual lusts for

years and ignored God's warnings and ways of escape. He allowed temptation to turn into lust and lust to turn into adultery. When the consequences of his adultery threatened to expose his sin, he covered it first with deception and then with murder. Satan could never tempt David with the entire package at once, but he deceived him with it piece by piece.

*4. (18-25) Joab sends word of Uriah's death back to David.*

**Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, and charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, if it happens that the king's wrath rises, and he says to you: 'Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?'— then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'" So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. And the messenger said to David, "Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and *some* of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab: 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.' So encourage him."**

a. **Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth:**  
This is a reference to Jdg 9:50-57, where Abimelech was

killed by coming too close to the walls of a city under siege. The idea is that Joab knew it was a bad military move to get so close to the walls, but he did it anyway on the command of David.

b. **Uriah the Hittite is dead also:** David heard these words with relief. He thought that now he could marry Bathsheba and give a plausible explanation for her pregnancy.

c. **The sword devours one as well as another:** This was a proverb regarding fortunes of war. It was a way of saying, "These things happen." David said it to his own guilty conscience as much as he said it to Joab.

*5. (26-27) David marries Bathsheba.*

**When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.**

a. **When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead:** We have no reason to believe that Bathsheba knew that David arranged the death of her husband. It is likely that David concealed all this from Bathsheba. At the same time, she was partly relieved to hear of her husband's death.

i. "There is little doubt to be made but that she was inwardly glad, considering her danger of being punished an adulteress, and her hopes of being now made a queen." (Trapp)

b. **And she became his wife:** This was nothing new for David. He had added wives before, so now he simply added another.

i. "David is sort of a hero now, in the eyes of the people. He has taken into his harem, the poor, pregnant wife, the widow of one of his fallen captains, so that the people say, "My look at the way he stands behind his men! He takes care of their widows when they are killed in battle. My what a marvelous king!" (Smith)

c. **The thing that David had done displeased the LORD:** This is the first mention of God in the chapter. God witnessed every event and read the intent of every heart, but His displeasure is only implied until this specific statement.

i. David's state of heart in the intervening year is reflected in Psa 32:1-5 : *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

ii. Psalms 32 shows that David was under intense conviction during this time and that all the joy in his life evaporated away. David knew the stress and agony of living a double, false life. He found no relief until he repented and got right with God again. "The better the man the dearer the price he pays for a short season of sinful pleasure." (Meyer)

iii. David was in that terrible place where he had too much sin in him to be happy in God, but he had too much of God in him to happy in sin. Because David



was a man after God's heart, God drew David to repentance and restoration.

iv. "When there is the most necessity for confession, there is often the greatest tardiness in making it. It was so in David's case. . . I think I can see why he could not have gone straight away from the sin to confession, for the sin prevented the confession-the sin blinded the eye, stultified the conscience, and stupefied the entire spiritual nature of David." (Spurgeon)

### **Nathan Rebukes David**

**2Sa 12:1** The LORD sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan went to him and said, "There were two men who lived in the same town; one was rich and the other poor.

2Sa 12:2 The rich man had many cattle and sheep,

2Sa 12:3 while the poor man had only one lamb, which he had bought. He took care of it, and it grew up in his home with his children. He would feed it some of his own food, let it drink from his cup, and hold it in his lap. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

2Sa 12:4 One day a visitor arrived at the rich man's home. The rich man didn't want to kill one of his own animals to fix a meal for him; instead, he took the poor man's lamb and prepared a meal for his guest."

2Sa 12:5 David became very angry at the rich man and said, "I swear by the living LORD that the man who did this ought to die!

2Sa 12:6 For having done such a cruel thing, he must pay back four times as much as he took."

2Sa 12:7 "You are that man," Nathan said to David. "And this is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I made you king of Israel and rescued you from Saul.

2Sa 12:8 I gave you his kingdom and his wives; I made you king over Israel and Judah. If this had not been enough, I would have given you twice as much.

2Sa 12:9 Why, then, have you disobeyed my commands? Why did you do this evil thing? You had Uriah killed in battle; you let the Ammonites kill him, and then you took his wife!

2Sa 12:10 Now, in every generation some of your descendants will die a violent death because you have disobeyed me and have taken Uriah's wife.

2Sa 12:11 I swear to you that I will cause someone from your own family to bring trouble on you. You will see it when I take your wives from you and give them to another man; and he will have intercourse with them in broad daylight.

2Sa 12:12 You sinned in secret, but I will make this happen in broad daylight for all Israel to see.' "

2Sa 12:13 "I have sinned against the LORD," David said. Nathan replied, "The LORD forgives you; you will not die.

2Sa 12:14 But because you have shown such contempt for the LORD in doing this, your child will die."

### **David's Child Dies**

2Sa 12:15 Then Nathan went home. The LORD caused the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David to become very sick.

2Sa 12:16 David prayed to God that the child would get well. He refused to eat anything, and every night he went into his room and spent the night lying on the floor.

2Sa 12:17 His court officials went to him and tried to make him get up, but he refused and would not eat anything with them.

2Sa 12:18 A week later the child died, and David's officials were afraid to tell him the news. They said, "While the child was living, David wouldn't answer us when we spoke to him.

How can we tell him that his child is dead? He might do himself some harm!"

2Sa 12:19 When David noticed them whispering to each other, he realized that the child had died. So he asked them, "Is the child dead?" "Yes, he is," they answered.

2Sa 12:20 David got up from the floor, took a bath, combed his hair, and changed his clothes. Then he went and worshiped in the house of the LORD. When he returned to the palace, he asked for food and ate it as soon as it was served.

2Sa 12:21 "We don't understand this," his officials said to him. "While the child was alive, you wept for him and would not eat; but as soon as he died, you got up and ate!"

2Sa 12:22 "Yes," David answered, "I did fast and weep while he was still alive. I thought that the LORD might be merciful to me and not let the child die.

2Sa 12:23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Could I bring the child back to life? I will some day go to where he is, but he can never come back to me."

### **Solomon's Birth**

2Sa 12:24 Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba. He had intercourse with her, and she bore a son, whom David named Solomon. The LORD loved the boy

2Sa 12:25 and commanded the prophet Nathan to name the boy Jedidiah, because the LORD loved him.

### **Rabbah Is Captured**

2Sa 12:26 Meanwhile Joab continued his campaign against Rabbah, the capital city of Ammon, and was about to capture it.

2Sa 12:27 He sent messengers to David to report: "I have attacked Rabbah and have captured its water supply.

2Sa 12:28 Now gather the rest of your forces, attack the city and take it yourself. I don't want to get the credit for

capturing it."

2Sa 12:29 So David gathered his forces, went to Rabbah, attacked it, and conquered it.

2Sa 12:30 From the head of the idol of the Ammonite god Molech David took a gold crown which weighed about seventy-five pounds and had a jewel in it. David took the jewel and put it in his own crown. He also took a large amount of loot from the city

2Sa 12:31 and put its people to work with saws, iron hoes, and iron axes, and forced them to work at making bricks. He did the same to the people of all the other towns of Ammon. Then he and his men returned to Jerusalem.

## **2 Samuel 12:1-31**

### **2 Samuel 12 - Nathan Confronts David**

#### **A. Nathan's confrontation.**

##### *1. (1-4) Nathan's parable.*

**Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. "The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."**

- a. **Then the LORD sent Nathan to David:** David's sin displeased the LORD but David didn't listen to the

conviction of the Holy Spirit or to his conscience. Now God sent someone else to speak to David. God mercifully kept speaking to David even when David didn't listen.

i. Yet no one should presume God will speak *forever* to the unrepentant sinner. God said in Gen 6:3, "*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.*" When we hear or sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit, we must respond to it immediately, because it might not always be there.

**b. There were two men in one city:** With wisdom and courage, Nathan used a story to get the message through to David. It was common in those days to keep a lamb as a pet, and Nathan used this story of the pet lamb to speak to his friend David.

i. Previously the prophet Nathan delivered a message of great blessing to David (2 Samuel 7). David knew that Nathan was not a negative critic but a friend. It made David receptive to the message of the story.

**c. Who refused to take from his own flock... he took the poor man's lamb:** The sin Nathan describes is *theft*. There is a sense in which David *stole* something from Uriah. The Bible (in 1Co 7:3-5) says that in marriage a husband has authority over the body of his wife (and vice-versa). Obviously, David did not have this authority over the body of Bathsheba and he *stole* from Uriah. Adultery and sexual immorality are *theft* - taking something that does not belong to us.

i. This principle is also true regarding pornography and lust. Leviticus 18 describes the sin of *uncovering the nakedness* of those other than our spouse. The idea is that the nakedness of others doesn't belong to us, and it is theft if we take it.

2. (5-6) *David condemns the cruel man of Nathan's story.*

**So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."**

a. **David's anger was greatly aroused:** Nathan did not ask David for a judicial decision, and David naturally assumed the story was true. David immediately passed sentence on the guilty man of Nathan's story. David showed that we often try to rid our guilty consciences by passing judgment on someone else.

b. **The man who has done this shall surely die:** David's sense of righteous indignation was so affected by his own guilt that he commanded a death sentence for the hypothetical case brought by Nathan, even though it wasn't a capital crime.

i. David had to condemn his own sin before he could find forgiveness. We often try to find refuge in excusing or minimizing or deflecting the blame of our sin; we simply do not condemn sin in ourselves.

ii. David's use of the oath "**As the LORD lives**" shows how passionate his indignation is. He called God to witness the righteousness of his death sentence upon Nathan's hypothetical rich man.

c. **He shall restore fourfold for the lamb:** David rightly knew that penalizing the rich man - even with death - wasn't enough. He also had to **restore** something to the man he took something from. David knew that true repentance means *restitution*.

i. **Restore fourfold** also shows that David's sin and hardness of heart did not diminish his *knowledge* of the Bible. He immediately knew what the Bible said about those who steal sheep: *If a man steals an ox or*

*a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep (Exo 22:1).* David knew the words of the Bible but was distant from the Author.

d. **Because he had no pity:** The idea is that the man *should* have had pity on his neighbor and did not. In the same way David *should* have had pity on Uriah and Bathsheba's father and grandfather.

### 3. (7-9) Nathan's confrontation.

**Then Nathan said to David, "You *are* the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.'"**

a. **You are the man:** With this, Nathan applied the parable with alarming simplicity. Nathan had to shock David into seeing his sin for what it was. "This was downright plain dealing indeed." (Trapp)

i. Shocked, but not frightened: "You cannot frighten men into repentance, you may frighten them into remorse; and the remorse may or may not lead on to repentance." (Maclaren)

ii. "God accuses us and condemns us one by one that He may save us one by one." (Maclaren) A *personal* salvation requires a *personal* conviction of sin. It wasn't enough for David to confess that he was a

sinner in a general sense; he had to confess his sin at this very point.

iii. In this sense, the confession of our sin needs to be specific. J. Edwin Orr tells of a time of revival in Brazil when a lady stood in a crowded church and said, "Please pray for me. I need to love people more." The leader gently told her, "That is not confession, sister. Anyone could have said it." Later in the service the woman stood again and said, "Please pray for me. What I should have said is that my tongue has caused a lot of trouble in this church." Her pastor whispered to the leader, "Now she's talking."

iv. It costs nothing to say, "I'm not everything I should be" or "I ought to be a better Christian." It does cost something to say, "I have been a trouble-maker in this church" or "I have had bitterness towards certain leaders, to whom I apologize right now."

**b. I anointed you... I delivered you... I gave you... and gave you the house of Israel and Judah... I also would have given you much more:** Through Nathan, God explained to David that his sin was really a base expression of *ingratitude*. When God gave all this to David and had so much more to give him, David sought out sin instead.

**c. Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight:** In Psa 19:8, David said: *The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.* Yet by his sin he **despised the commandment of the LORD**. David acted as if God's command was wrong and to be **despised** when he did **evil in His sight**.

**d. You have killed Uriah... you have taken his wife:** This is another way of saying, "**You are the man!**" God



won't allow David to blame anyone or anything else.

4. (10) *David's punishment.*

**"Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."**

a. **The sword shall never depart from your house:**

God promised that from that day forward David would know violence and bloodshed among his own family members.

i. David demanded fourfold restitution for the man in Nathan's parable. God exacted fourfold restitution for Uriah from four of David's sons: Bathsheba's child, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah.

b. **Because you have despised Me:** In 2Sa 12:9 God said that David *despised the commandment of the LORD*. Here Nathan explained that in doing this, David **despised** God Himself. We can't despise God's commandments without despising Him.

i. Many who live in either open or hidden sin seem to believe it has no effect or little effect on their relationship with God. But despising God's commandment means despising God Himself, and we can't have fellowship with God and despise Him at the same time. *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (1Jn 1:6)*

c. **The wife of Uriah the Hittite:** God didn't even use Bathsheba's own name. He wanted David to consider Bathsheba not only as an individual but also as **the wife of Uriah the Hittite**.

5. (11-12) *Adversity against David.*

**“Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’”**

a. **I will raise up adversity against you from your own house:** The Living Bible translates **adversity** as “rebellion.” God warned David that because he troubled another man’s house, God will allow trouble to come upon David’s house - from within the house.

b. **I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor:** As David violated another man’s wife, so another will violate his wives. This was fulfilled in 2Sa 16:21-22.

i. “Absalom abused his father’s concubines on the house-top: and haply on that same terrace from whence he first looked, liked, and lusted after Bathsheba.” (Trapp)

c. **You did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel:** In these judgments, David will reap what he has sown - with interest.

## **B. David’s repentance; the death of his newborn son.**

### **1. (13a) David’s repentance.**

**So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”**

a. **I have sinned against the LORD:** David’s confession is a good example. He placed the blame squarely on his own shoulders. He did not minimize his offence. David realized that he especially sinned against God.

i. In the original Hebrew, David’s statement **I have sinned against the LORD** amounts to only two

words: *hata al-Yahweh*. These two words, and the heart they reflect, show the fundamental difference between David and Saul. Confession doesn't need to be long to be real and sincere. "The greatest griefs are not always the most verbal. Saul confessed his sin more largely, but less effectually." (Trapp)

ii. "The words are very few, but that is a good sign of a thoroughly broken spirit. There is no excuse, no hiding, no concealment of the sin. There is no searching for a loophole, no pretext put forward, no human weakness pleaded. He acknowledged his guilt openly, candidly and without any denial of truth." (Keil and Delitzsch)

iii. This was an exceptionally good response from a man of David's standing in life. When confronted with sin, kings often say, "Off with their head." David showed that God was working on his heart all along, and Nathan's confrontation was just the last piece of that work.

iv. "In all this David was pre-eminently revealed as a man after God's own heart. Other men who had been guilty of such failure might have defended their actions, might have slain the prophet. Not so with this man. He knew God, and he knew the wrong of his action, and he confessed his sin." (Morgan)

b. **I**: David spoke of *himself*. It isn't "we" though it was true that he was not the only sinner. Yet David knew that he had to deal with *his* sin. David showed *personal responsibility* for his sin.

c. **Have sinned**: David didn't use elaborate or soft vocabulary. He **sinned**. It wasn't a *mistake*, an *error*, a *mess-up*, an *indiscretion*, or a *problem*.

d. **Against the LORD:** This expressed the *enormity* of David's sin. His sin against Bathsheba, against Uriah, against Ahithophel, against his wives and children, and against the nation were great. But his sin **against the LORD** was greatest of all. There are no small sins against a great God, and great sins are even greater.

e. **I have sinned against the LORD:** After meditation, David more eloquently expressed his repentance in Psalms 51.

i. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight - that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.... For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, and a broken and contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise. (Psa 51:1-4; Psalms 16-17)*

ii. David's awareness of sin, desire for cleansing, recognition of God's righteous judgment, and understanding of what God wants are each clear in Psalms 51.

2. (13b-14) *Forgiveness and the immediate consequences of David's sin.*

**And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is born to you shall surely die.*"**

a. **The LORD also has put away your sin:** God's forgiveness was *immediate*. God did not demand a time of probation. **You shall not die** meant that David would be spared the penalty for adultery commanded under the Law of Moses.

i. David believed the word of the prophet, "*You are the man!*" Therefore he could also believe the word, **"The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."**

b. **You have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme:** David did this by doing just what those **enemies of the LORD** would do in the same situation. What David did was not unusual among the kings and rulers of the world, but it should be unusual among God's people.

i. "Hitherto all the king's care had been to conceal his sin from the world, which yet he could not do with all his skill, for the enemies had got it by the end." (Trapp)

c. **The child who is born to you shall surely die:** There is a difference in judgment *for* sin and judgment *by* sin. God forgave David's sin, but He would not shield him from every consequence of the sin. David had to face the consequences of his sin, beginning with the death of the child born by Bathsheba.

i. This shows that God didn't only want to heal David of the *guilt* of his sin; He also wanted to heal David of the *presence* of this sin. We never read of David committing adultery again because God used these chastisements to drive such impurities far from David.

ii. "Long before his sin with Bathsheba, there were various indications as to David's special liability to temptation. That sin only threw out upon the surface

the evil that was always within him; and now God, having him see that the deadly cancer is there, begins to use the knife to cut it out of him." (Spurgeon)

*3. (15-23) The death of David's son.*

**Then Nathan departed to his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So the elders of his house arose *and went* to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!" When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servants said to him, "What *is* this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child *while he was* alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food." And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell *whether* the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."**

a. **The LORD struck the child:** This is hard for many to accept. Sadly, often the innocent suffers because of the sin of the guilty. Since the sickness came immediately after the words of Nathan the prophet, it was received as from the hand of God.

i. "The biblical writer does not hesitate to attribute directly to the Lord the sickness of this child, in accordance with the prophet's word." (Baldwin)

ii. This was far more tragic for David and Bathsheba than it was for the child himself. Their young son suffered for several days and we may trust that God's comfort was extended to the child in the midst of suffering. At the end of his suffering, the child went to eternal glory. Though the child died, the chastisement was really upon David and Bathsheba and not upon the child.

iii. "God's mercy to his erring and repentant children will be shown in converting the results of their sin into the fires of their purification." (Meyer)

iv. This illustrates an important principle: *even when sin is forgiven a price must be paid*. God does not simply pass over or excuse our sin. It is forgiven, and a price is paid. Often *an innocent party* pays the price for forgiveness.

b. **That Uriah's wife bore to David:** Though Uriah was dead, and David was legally married to Bathsheba, the Biblical writer still referred to Bathsheba as **Uriah's wife**. This is because when the child was conceived Uriah was alive and Bathsheba was **Uriah's wife**. It is God's way of saying, "Uriah's death and the subsequent marriage *doesn't* make everything alright."

c. **David therefore pleaded with God for the child:** David was right to take the announcement of God's

judgment as an invitation to earnestly seek His mercy. When God's judgment is announced or present, we shouldn't receive it passively or fatalistically. We should cry out to God in repentance and ask for His grace and mercy.

d. **David fasted... the child died:** This shows that extraordinary prayer and fasting does not change God's mind. It put David in the right place to receive what he must from God, but it did not "force" God to change His plan.

i. Extraordinary prayer and fasting are not tools to get whatever we want from God. They are demonstrations of radical submission and surrender to God's power and will.

e. **He went into the house of the LORD and worshiped:** This shows that David's extraordinary prayer and fasting were answered. He had a sense of peace when the child died, knowing he did all he could to seek God's mercy in a time of chastisement.

i. The ability to worship and honor God in a time of trial or crisis is a wonderful demonstration of spiritual confidence.

f. **I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me:** David was confident that his son would meet him in heaven. This is an indication that babies and perhaps children who pass from this world to the next will go to heaven.

i. 1Co 7:14 is an additional promise of assurance that the children of believers are saved, at least until they come to an age of personal accountability (which may differ for each child). However, we have no similar *promise* for the children of parents who are not Christians.



ii. If the children of non-Christian parents are saved and do go to heaven – even some of them – it is important to understand that it is not because they are *innocent*. As sons and daughters of guilty Adam, we are also born guilty. If such children go to heaven, it is not because they are innocent and *deserve* heaven, but because the rich mercy of God has been extended to them also.

4. (24-25) *God extends His mercy to David and Bathsheba.*

**Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, and He sent *word* by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.**

a. **David comforted Bathsheba his wife:** This is the first time the Biblical writer called this woman **Bathsheba** except for the mere reporting of her name in 2Sa 11:3. Each time before this she is called *the wife of Uriah*. Only now, after the chastisement for sin, is she called **Bathsheba his wife**.

b. **Went in to her and lay with her:** This shows that God did not command that David forsake or leave Bathsheba, even though his marriage to her was originally sinful. He was to honor God in the marriage commitment he made, even though it began in sin.

i. Paul commands the same principle in 1Co 7:17 : *As the Lord has called each one, so let him walk*. In part, this principle in context warns us against trying to undo the past in regard to relationships. God tells us to repent of whatever sin is there and then to move on. If you are married to your second wife, after wrongfully divorcing your first wife, and become a Christian, don't think you must now leave your second wife and go back to your first wife, trying to

undo the past. As the Lord has called you, walk in that place right now.

c. **So she bore a son... the LORD loved him:** Here is the great forgiveness and tenderness of God. He did not hold a grudge against David and Bathsheba. The days of blessing and fruitfulness were not over for David.

i. "David's best sons came of Bath-sheba; because they were the fruit of their humiliation." (Trapp)

d. **He called his name Solomon:** Remarkably it is *this son* - the son born out of a marriage that began in adultery - that will be heir to David's throne. God chose this son among David's many sons to be heir to the throne and the ancestor of the Messiah to demonstrate the truth that *God forgives repentant sinners*.

i. People may not forgive; we may refuse to really believe that we are forgiven. But God forgives repentant sinners.

e. **So he called his name Jedidiah:** The name **Jedidiah** means, "loved of the LORD." It was God's way of saying that He would love and bless this son of David and Bathsheba.

### **C. David's victory at Rabbah.**

1. (26-28) *Joab fights against Rabbah.*

**Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city's water *supply*. Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name."**

a. **Joab fought against Rabbah and the people of Ammon, and took the royal city:** This continued the

war that began in 2 Samuel 10. Joab was about to complete the defeat of the Ammonites.

**b. Lest I take the city and it be called after my name:** Joab goaded David into returning to battle by saying, "I'll take all the credit to myself if you don't come and finish this war."

i. Joab struggled for more than a year to conquer Rabbah, and the victory only came when David got things right with God. There was an unseen spiritual reason behind the lack of victory at Rabbah.

ii. "David's sin at home had hindered Joab's good success abroad, and retarded the conquest of this city Rabbah, which now is ready to be taken, that David reconciled to God may have the honour of it." (Trapp)

*2. (29-31) David captures the city, takes the spoil, and sets the people to forced labor.*

**So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it. Then he took their king's crown from his head. Its weight was a talent of gold, with precious stones. And it was set on David's head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance. And he brought out the people who were in it, and put *them to work* with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them cross over to the brick works. So he did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.**

**a. David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah:** This was the final phase of David's restoration. He went back to doing what he should have done all along - leading Israel out to battle, instead of remaining in Jerusalem.

b. **Fought against it, and took it:** David was in victory once again. His sin did not condemn him to a life of failure and defeat. There was chastisement for David's sin, but it did not mean that his life was ruined.

c. **He took their king's crown... it was set on David's head:** David's sin didn't take away his crown. Had David refused the voice of Nathan the Prophet it might have. Because David responded with confession and repentance, there was still a crown for **David's head**.

i. "David's fall should put those who have not fallen on their guard, and save from despair those who have."  
(Augustine)

## **Amnon and Tamar**

**2Sa 13:1** David's son Absalom had a beautiful unmarried sister named Tamar. Amnon, another of David's sons, fell in love with her.

2Sa 13:2 He was so much in love with her that he became sick, because it seemed impossible for him to have her; as a virgin, she was kept from meeting men.

2Sa 13:3 But he had a friend, a very shrewd man named Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shammah.

2Sa 13:4 Jonadab said to Amnon, "You are the king's son, yet day after day I see you looking sad. What's the matter?" "I'm in love with Tamar, the sister of my half brother Absalom," he answered.

2Sa 13:5 Jonadab said to him, "Pretend that you are sick and go to bed. When your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please ask my sister Tamar to come and feed me. I want her to fix the food here where I can see her, and then serve it to me herself.' "

2Sa 13:6 So Amnon pretended that he was sick and went to bed. King David went to see him, and Amnon said to him,

"Please let Tamar come and make a few cakes here where I can see her, and then serve them to me herself."

2Sa 13:7 So David sent word to Tamar in the palace: "Go to Amnon's house and fix him some food."

2Sa 13:8 She went there and found him in bed. She took some dough, prepared it, and made some cakes there where he could see her. Then she baked the cakes

2Sa 13:9 and emptied them out of the pan for him to eat, but he wouldn't. He said, "Send everyone away"—and they all left.

2Sa 13:10 Then he said to her, "Bring the cakes here to my bed and serve them to me yourself." She took the cakes and went over to him.

2Sa 13:11 As she offered them to him, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me!"

2Sa 13:12 "No," she said. "Don't force me to do such a degrading thing! That's awful!"

2Sa 13:13 How could I ever hold up my head in public again? And you—you would be completely disgraced in Israel. Please, speak to the king, and I'm sure that he will give me to you."

2Sa 13:14 But he would not listen to her; and since he was stronger than she was, he overpowered her and raped her.

2Sa 13:15 Then Amnon was filled with a deep hatred for her; he hated her now even more than he had loved her before. He said to her, "Get out!"

2Sa 13:16 "No," she answered. "To send me away like this is a greater crime than what you just did!" But Amnon would not listen to her;

2Sa 13:17 he called in his personal servant and said, "Get this woman out of my sight! Throw her out and lock the door!"

2Sa 13:18 The servant put her out and locked the door. Tamar was wearing a long robe with full sleeves, the usual

clothing for an unmarried princess in those days.

2Sa 13:19 She sprinkled ashes on her head, tore her robe, and with her face buried in her hands went away crying.

2Sa 13:20 When her brother Absalom saw her, he asked, "Has Amnon molested you? Please, sister, don't let it upset you so much. He is your half brother, so don't tell anyone about it." So Tamar lived in Absalom's house, sad and lonely.

2Sa 13:21 When King David heard what had happened, he was furious.

2Sa 13:22 And Absalom hated Amnon so much for having raped his sister Tamar that he would no longer even speak to him.

### **Absalom Murders Amnon**

2Sa 13:23 Two years later Absalom was having his sheep sheared at Baal Hazor, near the town of Ephraim, and he invited all the king's sons to be there.

2Sa 13:24 He went to King David and said, "Your Majesty, I am having my sheep sheared. Will you and your officials come and take part in the festivities?"

2Sa 13:25 "No, my son," the king answered. "It would be too much trouble for you if we all went." Absalom insisted, but the king would not give in, and he asked Absalom to leave.

2Sa 13:26 But Absalom said, "Well, then, will you at least let my brother Amnon come?" "Why should he?" the king asked.

2Sa 13:27 But Absalom kept on insisting until David finally let Amnon and all his other sons go with Absalom. Absalom prepared a banquet fit for a king

2Sa 13:28 and instructed his servants: "Notice when Amnon has had too much to drink, and then when I give

the order, kill him. Don't be afraid. I will take the responsibility myself. Be brave and don't hesitate!"

2Sa 13:29 So the servants followed Absalom's instructions and killed Amnon. All the rest of David's sons mounted their mules and fled.

2Sa 13:30 While they were on their way home, David was told: "Absalom has killed all your sons—not one of them is left!"

2Sa 13:31 The king stood up, tore his clothes in sorrow, and threw himself to the ground. The servants who were there with him tore their clothes also.

2Sa 13:32 But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shammah, said, "Your Majesty, they haven't killed all your sons. Only Amnon is dead. You could tell by looking at Absalom that he had made up his mind to do this from the time that Amnon raped his sister Tamar.

2Sa 13:33 So don't believe the news that all your sons are dead; only Amnon was killed."

### **Absalom Flees to Geshur**

2Sa 13:34 In the meantime Absalom had fled. Just then the soldier on sentry duty saw a large crowd coming down the hill on the road from Horonaim. He went to the king and reported what he had seen.

2Sa 13:35 Jonadab said to David, "Those are your sons coming, just as I said they would."

2Sa 13:36 As soon as he finished saying this, David's sons came in; they started crying, and David and his officials also cried bitterly.

2Sa 13:37 (37-38) Absalom fled and went to the king of Geshur, Talmai son of Ammihud, and stayed there three years. David mourned a long time for his son Amnon;

2Sa 13:39 but when he got over Amnon's death, he was filled with longing for his son Absalom.

## 2 Samuel 13:1-39

### 2 Samuel 13 - Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom

#### A. Amnon and Tamar.

##### 1. (1-2) Amnon's infatuation with Tamar.

**After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her.**

a. **Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar:** This brother and sister were the children of David through his wife *Maacah*, who was *the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur* (2Sa 3:3).

b. **Amnon the son of David:** Amnon was David's first-born son, born from his wife *Ahinoam the Jezreelitess* (2Sa 3:2). Being the first born, Amnon was the crown prince - first in line for the throne of Israel.

c. **Amnon the son of David loved her:** Amnon longed for Tamar so much that he became lovesick. It was even more difficult for him because **she was a virgin** - meaning that she was available for marriage, but not to Amnon because marriage between half-brother and half-sister was forbidden.

i. The name **Tamar** means "Palm Tree," signifying fruitfulness. The name **Absalom** means "His Father's Peace." The name **Amnon** means "Faithful, Stable." "None of them answered their names." (Trapp)

##### 2. (3-5) Jonadab's evil advice.



**But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab was a very crafty man. And he said to him, "Why *are* you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat it from her hand.'"**

a. **Jonadab was a very crafty man:** Indeed, he was. His wicked advice to Amnon began a disastrous chain of events. **Jonadab** was a cousin to Amnon, being the son of David's brother (2Sa 13:32).

i. "A friend no friend; a carnal friend, a spiritual enemy, who advised, for the recovery of the body, the ruin of his soul." (Trapp)

b. **I love Tamar:** As later events will show, he did not **love Tamar** at all. Amnon lusted after Tamar and called it love. He certainly was not the last person to do this, and lust often masquerades as love.

c. **My brother Absalom's sister:** If Absalom was **my brother** then clearly Tamar was *my sister*. In his lust, Amnon did not allow himself to call Tamar his sister - instead, she was **Absalom's sister**. The power of lust is strong enough to twist the way we see reality.

d. **Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill:** Jonadab advised Amnon to deceitfully arrange a private meeting with Tamar. He didn't need to say, "And then force yourself on Tamar," because in their shared wickedness, Jonadab and Amnon thought the same wicked thoughts.

3. (6-10) *Amnon pretends illness in order to be alone with Tamar.*

**Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand." And David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Now go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was lying down. Then she took flour and kneaded *it*, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. And she took the pan and placed *them* out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Amnon said, "Have everyone go out from me." And they all went out from him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought *them* to Amnon her brother in the bedroom.**

a. **Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me:** Amnon's behavior was clearly childish, and David indulged it. Amnon acted like a baby. It is childish to refuse food unless it is served the way we want it.

i. From this and other passages, it appears that David was generally indulgent towards his children. This may be because he felt guilty that in having so many wives, children, and responsibilities of state, he didn't take the time to be a true father to his children. He dealt with the guilt by being soft and indulgent with his children.

ii. Amnon took Jonadab's wicked advice quickly and completely. It's too bad that men don't often respond to godly advice the same way.

b. **And David sent home to Tamar:** This was what Amnon wanted. If he was alone with Tamar because David commanded it, then it gave part of the responsibility to David.

c. **But he refused to eat:** Amnon showed by this that everything he told David was a lie. He continued the deception, so he could force himself upon Tamar in the bedroom.

#### 4. (11-14) Amnon rapes Tamar.

**Now when she had brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." And she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.**

a. **Come, lie with me, my sister:** Amnon's evil naturally revealed itself. Here he admitted his incestuous desire as he made the wicked suggestion to Tamar. Amnon seems to be a spoiled prince who always took what he wanted.

b. **Do not do this disgraceful thing:** Tamar easily saw how evil and **disgraceful** this was. Amnon could not see what was so plainly evident because he was blinded by lust.

c. **Where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel:** Tamar wisely asked Amnon to consider the result of his desire, both for her and for him. It would **shame** Tamar and

reveal Amnon as **one of the fools**. Blinded by lust, Amnon would not see the inevitable result of his desire.

i. "There is something exceedingly tender and persuasive in this speech of Tamar; but Amnon was a mere brute, and it was all lost on him." (Clarke)

d. **Please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you:** The Law of Moses commanded against any marriage between a half-brother and half-sister (Lev 18:11). Tamar probably said this simply as a ploy to get away from Amnon.

e. **He forced her and lay with her:** This was nothing but rape. Tamar did whatever she could to avoid this and all the blame clearly rests on Amnon.

5. (15) *Amnon rejects Tamar.*

**Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone!"**

a. **Amnon hated her exceedingly:** This revealed Amnon's attraction for Tamar for what it was - lust, not love. Amnon was attracted to Tamar for what he could get from her, not out of concern for her. In many lustful relationships there is a combination of both love and lust but in Amnon's attraction there was only lust.

i. In this single-minded lust, Amnon only built upon the example of his father David. David was never *this* dominated by lust, but he was pointed in the same direction. David's multiple marriages (2Sa 3:2-5) and his adultery with Bathsheba (2Sa 11:2-4) displayed this same direction.

ii. This is often how *the iniquity of the fathers* is carried on by *the children to the third and fourth generations* (Exo 20:5). A child will often model a

parent's sinful behavior and will often go further in the direction of sin the parent is pointed towards.

**b. The hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her:** Amnon had no real love for Tamar, only lust - and so he immediately felt guilty over his sin. Tamar was simply a reminder of his foolish sin. He wanted every reminder of his sin to be put far away.

i. "Let me give a friendly, fatherly tip unto all of you young girls, who may be in the position of Tamar, in that you have some fellow who is really pressing hard to have sex with you. He is the soul of kindness. He is very attentive. He calls all the time. He opens the door for you. He brings you flowers, but he's pushing hard for a sexual relationship. Don't give in. If you really love him, make him wait until you're married. If he really loves you, he will. Over, and over, time and again, the fellow will press and press until he has taken you to bed, and that's the last you see or hear from him. You're no longer a challenge. He's conquered, and he's off for new conquests. If you really love him and want him, make him wait. If you really love God, and love yourself, make him wait." (Smith)

*6. (16-18) Amnon casts Tamar out of his presence.*

**So she said to him, "No, indeed! This evil of sending me away *is* worse than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, "Here! Put this *woman* out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her." Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king's virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her.**

a. **This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me:** What Amnon did to Tamar was wrong, but he could still *somewhat* redeem the situation by either marrying her or paying her bride-price in accordance with Exo 22:16-17 and Deu 22:28-29. The payment was meant to compensate for the fact that Tamar was now less likely to be married because she was no longer a virgin.

b. **A robe of many colors:** The idea behind the Hebrew phrase is that it was a robe extending all the way down to the wrists and ankles, as opposed to a shorter one. It was a garment of privilege and status, showing the person did not have to work much.

c. **Put this woman out... bolt the door behind her:** Tamar deserved better treatment as an *Israelite*. Tamar deserved better treatment as a *relative*. Tamar deserved better treatment as a *sister*. Tamar deserved better treatment as a *princess*. Despite all this, Amnon spitefully treated Tamar as **this woman**.

7. (19-20) *Tamar mourns, Absalom comforts her.*

**Then Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe of many colors that was on her, and laid her hand on her head and went away crying bitterly. And Absalom her brother said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now hold your peace, my sister. He *is* your brother; do not take this thing to heart." So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.**

a. **Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe:** Tamar correctly treated this as a calamity and did not hide the truth that a terrible crime was committed against her. She did not give place to the voice of shame saying, "This was somehow your fault."

b. **Has Amnon your brother been with you:** Amnon probably thought he had concealed his crime. Nevertheless, it was so obvious to Absalom that he immediately knew that Amnon was responsible.

i. Part of the blindness of lust leads the lustful man or woman to believe that his or her actions are not obviously apparent to others. Amnon was deceived by this blindness of lust.

ii. Tamar didn't go to her father David because she knew he tended to be indulgent to his sons, and he excused all kinds of evil in them.

8. (21-22) *David's anger and inaction.*

**But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.**

a. **When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry:** David was right to be angry, but he didn't *do* anything to either protect Tamar or to correct Amnon. It may be that David was conscious of his own guilt in a similar matter and therefore felt a lack of moral authority to discipline his own son.

i. If this was the case, it was a grave miscalculation on David's part. He could have said to Amnon, "I know the evil that results when we don't restrain our lusts and affections. This is something you must address and conquer in God's strength." "Why did he not reprove him at least very sharply for this foul fact?" (Trapp)

ii. "They say a man never hears his own voice till it comes back to him from the phonograph. Certainly a man never sees the worst of himself until it reappears in his child." (Meyer)

b. **Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad:** Absalom played it cool. His devious nature set the stage for future revenge. "Nothing is more unsafe to be trusted, than the fair looks of a festered heart." (Trapp)

## **B. Absalom murders Amnon.**

1. (23-27) *Absalom invites all the king's sons to a feast.*

**And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal Hazor, which is near Ephraim; so Absalom invited all the king's sons. Then Absalom came to the king and said, "Kindly note, your servant has sheepshearers; please, let the king and his servants go with your servant." But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go now, lest we be a burden to you." Then he urged him, but he would not go; and he blessed him. Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" But Absalom urged him; so he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.**

a. **After two full years:** Two years went by but Absalom did not stop plotting the revenge of Amnon's sin against Tamar.

b. **Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal Hazor:** Sheep shearing was a festive time, and it was natural that Absalom had a great feast and invited **Amnon and all the king's sons**.

c. **So he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him:** Absalom showed some of the same cunning we saw in Amnon. He asked *David* to allow **Amnon and all the king's sons** to come to the feast. This made David partly responsible for their meeting, just as Amnon got David to allow Tamar to visit him with food.



2. (28-29) *Absalom kills Amnon.*

**Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, "Watch now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon!' then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant." So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.**

a. **When Amnon's heart is merry with wine:** As a cunning killer, Absalom waited until Amnon was relaxed and vulnerable. Amnon probably came to the feast nervous about being with Absalom, but after a few cups of wine he was relaxed. At that moment, Absalom gave the order to "**Strike Amnon!**" and they murdered him.

b. **So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded:** God promised David that *the sword shall never depart from your house* (2Sa 12:10) in judgment of David's sin. This is definitely a partial fulfillment of this promise.

i. "As David had committed adultery, made Uriah drunk, and then murdered him: so Amnon committeth incest, is made drunk, and [is] then murdered." (Trapp)

3. (30-36) *David learns of the murder of Amnon.*

**And it came to pass, while they were on the way, that news came to David, saying, "Absalom has killed all the king's sons, and not one of them is left!" So the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the ground, and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, "Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's**

**sons, for only Amnon is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead. For only Amnon is dead."** Then Absalom fled. And the young man who was keeping watch lifted his eyes and looked, and there, many people were coming from the road on the hillside behind him. And Jonadab said to the king, **"Look, the king's sons are coming; as your servant said, so it is."** So it was, as soon as he had finished speaking, that the king's sons indeed came, and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.

a. **Absalom has killed all the king's sons, and not one of them is left:** It is significant that David did not react to this news with disbelief. He sensed that Absalom was capable of such evil. David reacted with mourning instead of disbelief.

b. **Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men:** Jonadab brought the "good" news to David that **only Amnon is dead**, and dead because he **forced his sister Tamar**. Jonadab probably hoped to gain favor with David by bringing this more favorable news, but God knew that Jonadab set the whole course of events in motion with his wicked advice to Amnon (2Sa 13:3-5).

c. **The king and all his servants wept very bitterly:** David is rightly grieved at learning of the death of his eldest son, the Crown Prince Amnon. Yet David's lack of correction against Amnon contributed to this murder. If David had administered Biblical correction according to Exo 22:16-17 and Deu 22:28-29, Absalom would not have felt so free to administer his own brutal correction.

- i. "Absalom's fratricide would never have taken place if David had taken instant measures to punish Amnon." (Meyer)

#### 4. (37-39) *Absalom flees to Geshur.*

**But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day. So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. And King David longed to go to Absalom. For he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead.**

a. **Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur:** Absalom did not go to a city of refuge because he was guilty, and the cities of refuge were only meant to protect the *innocent*.

b. **Absalom fled and went to Geshur:** This made sense for Absalom because his mother's father was the king of Geshur (2Sa 3:3).

c. **King David longed to go to Absalom:** After three years, the sting of Amnon's murder was not as sharp. David simply longed to be reconciled to Absalom again - without correcting his son for his evil. David's indulgence towards Amnon is repeated towards Absalom and he will meet a similar end.

#### **Absalom Returns to Jerusalem**

**2Sa 14:1** Joab knew that King David missed Absalom very much,

2Sa 14:2 so he sent for a clever woman who lived in Tekoa. When she arrived, he said to her, "Pretend that you are in mourning; put on your mourning clothes, and don't comb your hair. Act like a woman who has been in mourning for a long time.

2Sa 14:3 Then go to the king and say to him what I tell you to say." Then Joab told her what to say.

2Sa 14:4 The woman went to the king, bowed down to the ground in respect, and said, "Help me, Your Majesty!"

2Sa 14:5 "What do you want?" he asked her. "I am a poor widow, sir," she answered. "My husband is dead.

2Sa 14:6 Sir, I had two sons, and one day they got into a quarrel out in the fields, where there was no one to separate them, and one of them killed the other.

2Sa 14:7 And now, sir, all my relatives have turned against me and are demanding that I hand my son over to them, so that they can kill him for murdering his brother. If they do this, I will be left without a son. They will destroy my last hope and leave my husband without a son to keep his name alive."

2Sa 14:8 "Go back home," the king answered, "and I will take care of the matter."

2Sa 14:9 "Your Majesty," she said, "whatever you do, my family and I will take the blame; you and the royal family are innocent."

2Sa 14:10 The king replied, "If anyone threatens you, bring him to me, and he will never bother you again."

2Sa 14:11 She said, "Your Majesty, please pray to the LORD your God, so that my relative who is responsible for avenging the death of my son will not commit a greater crime by killing my other son." "I promise by the living LORD," David replied, "that your son will not be harmed in the least."

2Sa 14:12 "Please, Your Majesty, let me say just one more thing," the woman said. "All right," he answered.

2Sa 14:13 She said to him, "Why have you done such a wrong to God's people? You have not allowed your own son to return from exile, and so you have condemned yourself by what you have just said.

2Sa 14:14 We will all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which can't be gathered again. Even God does not

bring the dead back to life, but the king can at least find a way to bring a man back from exile.

2Sa 14:15 Now, Your Majesty, the reason I have come to speak to you is that the people threatened me, and so I said to myself that I would speak to you in the hope that you would do what I ask.

2Sa 14:16 I thought you would listen to me and save me from the one who is trying to kill my son and me and so remove us from the land God gave his people.

2Sa 14:17 I said to myself that your promise, sir, would make me safe, because the king is like God's angel and can distinguish good from evil. May the LORD your God be with you!"

2Sa 14:18 The king answered, "I'm going to ask you a question, and you must tell me the whole truth." "Ask me anything, Your Majesty," she answered.

2Sa 14:19 "Did Joab put you up to this?" he asked her. She answered, "I swear by all that is sacred, Your Majesty, that there is no way to avoid answering your question. It was indeed your officer Joab who told me what to do and what to say.

2Sa 14:20 But he did it in order to straighten out this whole matter. Your Majesty is as wise as the angel of God and knows everything that happens."

2Sa 14:21 Later on the king said to Joab, "I have decided to do what you want. Go and get the young man Absalom and bring him back here."

2Sa 14:22 Joab threw himself to the ground in front of David in respect, and said, "God bless you, Your Majesty! Now I know that you are pleased with me, because you have granted my request."

2Sa 14:23 Then he got up and went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

2Sa 14:24 The king, however, gave orders that Absalom should not live in the palace. "I don't want to see him," the king said. So Absalom lived in his own house and did not appear before the king.

2Sa 14:25 There was no one in Israel as famous for his good looks as Absalom; he had no defect from head to toe.

2Sa 14:26 His hair was very thick, and he had to cut it once a year, when it grew too long and heavy. It would weigh about five pounds according to the royal standard of weights.

2Sa 14:27 Absalom had three sons and one daughter named Tamar, a very beautiful woman.

2Sa 14:28 Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king.

2Sa 14:29 Then he sent for Joab, to ask him to go to the king for him; but Joab would not come. Again Absalom sent for him, and again Joab refused to come.

2Sa 14:30 So Absalom said to his servants, "Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and it has barley growing in it. Go and set fire to it." So they went and set the field on fire.

2Sa 14:31 Joab went to Absalom's house and demanded, "Why did your servants set fire to my field?"

2Sa 14:32 Absalom answered, "Because you wouldn't come when I sent for you. I wanted you to go to the king and ask for me: 'Why did I leave Geshur and come here? It would have been better for me to have stayed there.' " And Absalom went on, "I want you to arrange for me to see the king, and if I'm guilty, then let him put me to death."

2Sa 14:33 So Joab went to King David and told him what Absalom had said. The king sent for Absalom, who went to him and bowed down to the ground in front of him. The king welcomed him with a kiss.

## **2 Samuel 14:1-33**

## **2 Samuel 14 - Absalom Returns to Jerusalem**

### **A. Joab intercedes for Absalom.**

#### *1. (1-3) Joab's plan to reconcile David and Absalom.*

**So Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was concerned about Absalom. And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman, and said to her, "Please pretend to be a mourner, and put on mourning apparel; do not anoint yourself with oil, but act like a woman who has been mourning a long time for the dead. Go to the king and speak to him in this manner." So Joab put the words in her mouth."**

**a. Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was concerned about Absalom:** David was obviously troubled by his estranged relationship with Absalom. Joab, David's chief general, **perceived** this and decided to do something to bring David and Absalom back together.

i. "In the case of Absalom and the king, the relationship remained virtually deadlocked, neither side having the spiritual incentive to break it." (Baldwin)

ii. We know that Joab was fiercely loyal to David, and he may have done this to protect David. Joab figured that it was dangerous to have Absalom stewing away in a distant country and felt that the safest thing to do was to bring about reconciliation between father and son.

**b. Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman:** Joab decided to soften David's heart towards Absalom by bringing a widow before him with a similar story of estrangement from her son.

#### *2. (4-11) The woman of Tekoa tells a story of one son dead and another son threatened with death.*

And when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself, and said, "Help, O king!" Then the king said to her, "What troubles you?" And she answered, "Indeed I *am* a widow, my husband is dead. Now your maidservant had two sons; and the two fought with each other in the field, and *there was* no one to part them, but the one struck the other and killed him. And now the whole family has risen up against your maidservant, and they said, 'Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may execute him for the life of his brother whom he killed; and we will destroy the heir also.' So they would extinguish my ember that is left, and leave to my husband *neither* name nor remnant on the earth." Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you." And the woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My lord, O king, *let* the iniquity *be* on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne *be* guiltless." So the king said, "Whoever says *anything* to you, bring him to me, and he shall not touch you anymore." Then she said, "Please let the king remember the LORD your God, and do not permit the avenger of blood to destroy anymore, lest they destroy my son." And he said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground."

a. **Help, O king:** In ancient Israel those who felt that their local judges didn't treat them fairly had access to the court of the king himself.

b. **Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may execute him for the life of his brother whom he killed:** The woman of Tekoa referred to the custom of the *avenger of blood*. The *avenger of blood* had the responsibility of avenging the death of a member of the family.



i. The *cities of refuge* mentioned in Num 35:9-34 were meant to protect someone guilty of manslaughter from being killed by an avenger of blood before the case could be heard properly.

**c. As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground:** This was what the woman - and Joab behind her - waited to hear. In saying this, David ignored the cause of justice for the sake of family sympathy and loyalty. In personal relationships it is a good and glorious thing to be generous with forgiveness and mercy when we are wronged. But David had a responsibility as the king and chief judge of Israel, and when he was sorely tempted to neglect that responsibility he did neglect it.

i. "He guaranteed safety at the expense of justice, and immediately the farsighted woman captured him in her trap." (Redpath)

ii. Several factors made this woman's appeal successful.

- She was a widow, which would invite sympathy.
- She lived at some distance from Jerusalem, which made it difficult to easily know or inquire of the facts of her case.
- She was old, which gave more dignity to her story.
- She wore the clothes of mourning to heighten the effect.
- She brought a case of family estrangement to David.
- She brought a case that was not too similar, lest it arouse David's suspicions.

*3. (12-17) The woman of Tekoa applies her story to David and Absalom.*

Therefore the woman said, "Please, let your maidservant speak *another* word to my lord the king." And he said, "Say on." So the woman said: "Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God? For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty, *in that* the king does not bring his banished one home again. For we will surely die and *become* like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him. Now therefore, I have come to speak of this thing to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. And your maidservant said, 'I will now speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his maidservant. For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man *who would* destroy me and my son together from the inheritance of God.' Your maidservant said, 'The word of my lord the king will now be comforting; for as the angel of God, so *is* my lord the king in discerning good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.'"

a. **The king does not bring his banished one home again:** The woman of Tekoa spoke boldly to David, confronting his sin of not initiating reconciliation with Absalom. Because he was estranged from David and growing more and more bitter, Absalom was a threat to Israel and David allowed it (**Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God?**).

i. David had some responsibility to *initiate* reconciliation. If David approached Absalom, he might be rejected, but he still had the responsibility to try. Yet as king and chief judge of Israel, he also had a responsibility to both initiate reconciliation and to do it the right way. David will not succeed in this.

ii. "He is willing to pardon the meanest of his subjects the murder of a brother at the instance of a poor widow, and he is not willing to pardon his son Absalom, whose restoration to favour is the desire of the whole nation." (Clarke)

**b. We will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground:** The woman of Tekoa wisely spoke to David about the *urgency* of reconciliation. "David, we all die and then the opportunity for reconciliation is over. Do it now."

**c. But He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him:** The woman of Tekoa meant, "Find a way to do it, David. God finds a way to bring us back to Himself." It is true that God finds a way - but not at the expense of justice. God reconciles us by *satisfying* justice, not by *ignoring* justice.

i. This is one of the best gospel texts in the Old Testament. If we are under the chastening of God, we may feel like **banished ones**. Yet we can put our place of being **His banished ones**, belonging to Him and trusting Him to bring us back to Him.

ii. God has devised a way to bring the banished back to Him, that they might not be **expelled from Him**. The way is through the person and work of Jesus, and how He stood in the place of guilty sinners as He hung on the cross and received the punishment that we deserved.

4. (18-20) *David asks the woman of Tekoa if Joab prompted her.*

**Then the king answered and said to the woman, "Please do not hide from me anything that I ask you." And the woman said, "Please, let my lord the king speak." So the king said, "Is the hand of Joab with**

you in all this?" And the woman answered and said, "As you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. For your servant Joab commanded me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant. To bring about this change of affairs your servant Joab has done this thing; but my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that *is* in the earth."

a. **Is the hand of Joab with you in all this:** David somehow knew that a plan this subtle had to come from the **hand of Joab**.

b. **He put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant:** Joab orchestrated this with precision. He knew exactly what strings to pull in David. Joab was loyal to David, but it was not a selfless loyalty.

5. (21-24) *Absalom returns to Jerusalem but not to David.*

**And the king said to Joab, "All right, I have granted this thing. Go therefore, bring back the young man Absalom." Then Joab fell to the ground on his face and bowed himself, and thanked the king. And Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord, O king, in that the king has fulfilled the request of his servant." So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. And the king said, "Let him return to his own house, but do not let him see my face." So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king's face.**

a. **Bring back the young man Absalom:** Joab got what he wanted and what he thought was best for the nation of Israel. He hoped that Absalom's reconciliation with David would prevent a rebellion.

**b. Let him return to his own house, but do not let me see my face:** David was overindulgent with his sons in the past (as when he got angry but did nothing against Amnon in 2Sa 13:21). Now David is too harsh with Absalom, refusing to see him after he had been in exiled in Geshur for three years (2Sa 13:38).

i. When parents don't discipline properly from the beginning, they tend to overcompensate in the name of "toughness." This often provokes the children to wrath (

Eph 6:4) and makes the parent-child relationship worse.

## **B. Absalom gains an audience with his father.**

*1. (25-27) Absalom's handsome appearance.*

**Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he cut the hair of his head—at the end of every year he cut *it* because it was heavy on him—when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels according to the king's standard. To Absalom were born three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a woman of beautiful appearance.**

**a. In all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks:** This begins to explain why Absalom was popular in Israel. Israel was attracted to King Saul because he was a very good-looking man (1Sa 9:2).

i. Absalom was also a man of political destiny. He was the third son of David (2Sa 3:2-5). The firstborn Amnon was gone, and we hear nothing more of

Chileab, the second born. It is likely that Absalom was the *crown prince*, next in line for the throne.

**b. He weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels:** Absalom had such a great head of hair that he cut five and one-half pounds of hair off his head every year.

i. "He was extremely proud of his long hair, and he lost his life because of it." (Redpath)

**c. One daughter whose name was Tamar:** Absalom was a man of deep and sympathetic feeling. He memorialized his wronged sister Tamar by naming a daughter after her.

2. (28-32) *Absalom is refused audience with the king.*

**And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king's face. Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come. So he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. Then Joab arose and came to Absalom's house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" And Absalom answered Joab, "Look, I sent to you, saying, 'Come here, so that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? *It would be* better for me *to be* there still.'" Now therefore, let me see the king's face; but if there is iniquity in me, let him execute me."**

**a. Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king's face:** During these two years we can imagine that Absalom grew more and more bitter against David. He was reconciled but only partially. David offered only a partial, incomplete reconciliation.

i. Absalom was banished from Israel because he murdered his brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13). Yet Absalom felt entirely justified in killing the man who raped his sister. His sense of justification made the bitterness against David more intense.

**b. Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire:** Frustrated that he could not see his father, Absalom burnt Joab's fields to get his attention. This showed how brutal and amoral Absalom was.

i. It's hard to think of a greater contrast than that between Absalom and the Prodigal Son of Jesus' parable. The Prodigal Son came back humble and repentant. Absalom came back burning Joab's fields.

ii. At the same time, sometimes God gets *our* attention by setting our "barley field" on fire. "He, knowing that we will not come by any other means, sendeth a serious trial - he sets our barley-field on fire, which he has a right to do, seeing our barley-fields are far more his than they are ours." (Spurgeon)

**c. If there is any iniquity in me, let him execute me:** This statement reflects Absalom's sense that he was fully justified in what he did.

*3. (33) David receives Absalom.*

**So Joab went to the king and told him. And when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom.**

a. **So Joab went to the king and told him:** As brutal and amoral as Absalom was, it worked. Burning Joab's fields got his attention and made Joab intercede on Absalom's behalf.

**b. He came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground:** Absalom outwardly submits to David, but David's two-year refusal to reconcile left a legacy of bitterness in Absalom that turned out badly for David, for Absalom, and for Israel.

**c. Then the king kissed Absalom:** David offered Absalom forgiveness without any repentance or resolution of the wrong. In personal relationships it is often a sign of love and graciousness to overlook a wrong. Pro 10:12 says, *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins*. But as King of Israel this was more than a personal matter with David. He was the "chief judge" of Israel and David excused and overlooked Absalom's obvious crimes.

i. "He should have kicked him rather; and not have hardened him to further villainy." (Trapp)

ii. "David's forgiveness of Absalom was completely inadequate, leading to a further outbreak of sin. God's forgiveness of a man's soul is completely adequate, and a great deterrent to continued sin." (Redpath)

iii. "May God write it on your soul: if the pardon you want is that God should wink at your sin, He will not do it." (Redpath)

## **Absalom's Conspiracy**

**2Sa 15:1** After this, Absalom provided a chariot and horses for himself, and an escort of fifty men.

2Sa 15:2 He would get up early and go and stand by the road at the city gate. Whenever someone came there with a dispute that he wanted the king to settle, Absalom would call him over and ask him where he was from. And after the man had told him what tribe he was from,

2Sa 15:3 Absalom would say, "Look, the law is on your side, but there is no representative of the king to hear your



case."

2Sa 15:4 And he would add, "How I wish I were a judge! Then anyone who had a dispute or a claim could come to me, and I would give him justice."

2Sa 15:5 When the man would approach Absalom to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out, take hold of him, and kiss him.

2Sa 15:6 Absalom did this with every Israelite who came to the king for judgment, and so he won their loyalty.

2Sa 15:7 After four years Absalom said to King David, "Sir, let me go to Hebron and keep a promise I made to the LORD.

2Sa 15:8 While I was living in Geshur in Syria, I promised the LORD that if he would take me back to Jerusalem, I would worship him in Hebron."

2Sa 15:9 "Go in peace," the king said. So Absalom went to Hebron.

2Sa 15:10 But he sent messengers to all the tribes of Israel to say, "When you hear the sound of trumpets, shout, 'Absalom has become king at Hebron!' "

2Sa 15:11 There were two hundred men who at Absalom's invitation had gone from Jerusalem with him; they knew nothing of the plot and went in all good faith.

2Sa 15:12 And while he was offering sacrifices, Absalom also sent to the town of Gilo for Ahithophel, who was one of King David's advisers. The plot against the king gained strength, and Absalom's followers grew in number.

### **David Flees Jerusalem**

2Sa 15:13 A messenger reported to David, "The Israelites are pledging their loyalty to Absalom."

2Sa 15:14 So David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "We must get away at once if we want to

escape from Absalom! Hurry! Or else he will soon be here and defeat us and kill everyone in the city!"

2Sa 15:15 "Yes, Your Majesty," they answered. "We are ready to do whatever you say."

2Sa 15:16 So the king left, accompanied by all his family and officials, except for ten concubines, whom he left behind to take care of the palace.

2Sa 15:17 As the king and all his men were leaving the city, they stopped at the last house.

2Sa 15:18 All his officials stood next to him as the royal bodyguards passed by in front of him. The six hundred soldiers who had followed him from Gath also passed by,

2Sa 15:19 and the king said to Ittai, their leader, "Why are you going with us? Go back and stay with the new king. You are a foreigner, a refugee away from your own country.

2Sa 15:20 You have lived here only a short time, so why should I make you wander around with me? I don't even know where I'm going. Go back and take all your people with you—and may the LORD be kind and faithful to you."

2Sa 15:21 But Ittai answered, "Your Majesty, I swear to you in the LORD's name that I will always go with you wherever you go, even if it means death."

2Sa 15:22 "Fine!" David answered. "March on!" So Ittai went on with all his men and their dependents.

2Sa 15:23 The people cried loudly as David's followers left. The king crossed Kidron Brook, followed by his men, and together they went out toward the wilderness.

2Sa 15:24 Zadok the priest was there, and with him were the Levites, carrying the sacred Covenant Box. They set it down and didn't pick it up again until all the people had left the city. The priest Abiathar was there too.

2Sa 15:25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Take the Covenant Box back to the city. If the LORD is pleased with

me, some day he will let me come back to see it and the place where it stays.

2Sa 15:26 But if he isn't pleased with me—well, then, let him do to me what he wishes."

2Sa 15:27 And he went on to say to Zadok, "Look, take your son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan and go back to the city in peace.

2Sa 15:28 Meanwhile, I will wait at the river crossings in the wilderness until I receive news from you."

2Sa 15:29 So Zadok and Abiathar took the Covenant Box back into Jerusalem and stayed there.

2Sa 15:30 David went on up the Mount of Olives crying; he was barefoot and had his head covered as a sign of grief. All who followed him covered their heads and cried also.

2Sa 15:31 When David was told that Ahithophel had joined Absalom's rebellion, he prayed, "Please, LORD, turn Ahithophel's advice into nonsense!"

2Sa 15:32 When David reached the top of the hill, where there was a place of worship, his trusted friend Hushai the Archite met him with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head.

2Sa 15:33 David said to him, "You will be of no help to me if you come with me,

2Sa 15:34 but you can help me by returning to the city and telling Absalom that you will now serve him as faithfully as you served his father. And do all you can to oppose any advice that Ahithophel gives.

2Sa 15:35 The priests Zadok and Abiathar will be there; tell them everything you hear in the king's palace.

2Sa 15:36 They have their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan with them, and you can send them to me with all the information you gather."

2Sa 15:37 So Hushai, David's friend, returned to the city just as Absalom was arriving.

## 2 Samuel 15:1-37

### 2 Samuel 15 - Absalom's Rebellion

#### A. Absalom's deceptive take-over.

1. (1-6) *Absalom steals the hearts of the men of Israel.*

**After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city *are* you from?" And he would say, "Your servant *is* from such and such a tribe of Israel." Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case *is* good and right; but *there is* no deputy of the king to hear you." Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.**

a. **Chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him:** This means that Absalom did not want the chariot for speed, but to make an impressive procession. This was Absalom the politician, sensing what the people wanted and knowing how to give them the image of it.

i. Samuel - who anointed Absalom's father - never went around with horses and chariots and an entourage. Samuel traveled on foot - and as a man, *Absalom wasn't worthy to be mentioned in the same breath as Samuel.*

b. **Whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision:** Ancient kings were more than the heads of government, they were also the “supreme court” of their kingdom. If someone believed that a local court did not give them justice, they then appealed to the court of the king, where the king or a representative of the king heard their case.

c. **Your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you:** Absalom stirred up dissatisfaction with David’s government and campaigned against David by promising to provide justice that David (supposedly) denied the people.

d. **Oh, that I were made judge in the land... I would give him justice:** Absalom had reason to be disillusioned with David’s administration of justice. When Amnon raped Tamar, David did nothing. When Absalom did something about it, David banished Absalom and kept him at a distance even when he came back.

e. **Whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him:** Absalom was skilled at projecting a “man of the people” image. In an obvious display, he wouldn’t let others **bow down** to him but would lift them up, shake their hand, and embrace them.

i. From what we know of Absalom, we can guess that he really didn’t consider himself a “man of the people” at all. He regularly acted as if he was above others and the laws that applied to others didn’t apply to him. He knew he was better looking, better connected, better off, and had better political instincts than most anyone. But these political instincts made Absalom know that he had to create the *image* of a man of the people.

ii. In ancient Israel they were too easily impressed by image and too slow to see or appreciate the reality behind the image. Since the days of ancient Israel, we have only become *more* impressed by image over reality.

iii. "Absalom appeared to be the *real* and was the *undisputed* heir to the throne; David could not, in the course of nature, live very long; and most people are more disposed to hail the beams of the *rising*, than exult in those of the *setting*, sun." (Clarke)

f. **Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel:** Absalom's cunning campaign worked. He became more *popular* and more *trusted* than David.

i. Absalom knew exactly how to do this.

- He carefully cultivated an exciting, enticing image (**chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him**).
- He worked hard (**Absalom would rise early**).
- He knew where to position himself (**beside the way to the gate**).
- He looked for troubled people (**anyone who had a lawsuit**).
- He reached out to troubled people (**Absalom would call to him**).
- He took a personal interest in the troubled person (**What city are you from?**).
- He sympathized with the person (**your case is good and right**).
- He never attacked David directly (**no deputy of the king to hear you**).

- He left the troubled person more troubled (**no deputy of the king to hear you**).

- Without directly attacking David, Absalom promised to do better. (**Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.**)

ii. Absalom's clever approach made him able to subvert and divide David's kingdom without saying any specific thing that could condemn him. If someone objected Absalom would simply say, "Tell me one specific thing that I have said or done." In fact, Absalom could do all this and say, "I'm *helping* David to deal with all this discontent" while Absalom was in fact *promoting* discontent.

iii. David was Israel's greatest king - and Israel became dissatisfied with him and let a wicked, amoral man steal their hearts. There are many reasons why this happened.

- David was getting older.
- David's sins diminished his standing.
- People like change and Absalom was exciting.
- Absalom was very skilled and cunning.
- David had to enter into the *fellowship of His sufferings*, and be rejected like the Son of David would later be rejected.

iv. "Behold a king, the greatest that ever lived, a profound politician, an able general, a brave soldier, a poet of the most sublime genius and character, a prophet of the Most High God, and the deliverer of his country, driven from his dominions by his own son, abandoned by his fickle people." (Clarke)

v. We might say that Absalom's greatest sin was *impatience*. Absalom "seemed to stand *nearest to the throne*; but his sin was, that he sought it during his father's life, and endeavoured to dethrone him in order to sit in his stead." (Clarke)

2. (7-10) *Absalom plans the overthrow of David's kingdom.*

**Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD. For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'" And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!'"**

a. **After forty years:** This perhaps was Absalom's age at the time, but some believe that this is a minor corruption of the text and that it should read *four years* based on the readings in Syriac and Arabic translations, Josephus, and some Hebrew manuscripts.

b. **Let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD:** Absalom committed treason under the guise of worship. He knew that the *appearance* of spirituality could work in his favor.

i. It is possible - perhaps likely - that Absalom did all this *feeling* spiritual and in God's will. Men in Absalom's place often deceive themselves with words like this: "Lord, You know we need new leadership. Thank you for raising me up for such a time as this. Guide me and bless me, O Lord, as I endeavor to do what is best for Your people."



ii. Divisive people almost *never* see themselves as divisive. They see themselves as crusaders for God's righteous cause and often believe or hope God's hand is upon them. This is especially a problem when many will only believe a person is divisive if they were to *admit* they are divisive.

c. **Go in peace:** Ironically, these were David's last words to Absalom. Upon hearing these, Absalom went to carry on the plot to overthrow David's kingdom.

d. **Absalom reigns in Hebron:** Absalom counted on the hope that most of Israel would see this as *succession* and not *treason*.

### 3. (11-12) Legitimacy for Absalom's government.

**And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything. Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city—from Giloh—while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.**

a. **With Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem:** Absalom wisely knew that he needed others to endorse - or at least to *appear* to endorse - his government. He counted on these **two hundred men** who were not *against* David to at least be silent and therefore give the impression that they were *for* Absalom.

i. When the innocent and unknowing are among the divisive, their *silence* is always received as *agreement*.

b. **Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor:** Absalom's government gained more prestige when one of David's top aides defected to his side. This genuinely hurt David; he described his feelings

in Psalms 41 : *Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me (Psa 41:9).*

i. Ahithophel was renowned for his wisdom and wise counsel (2Sa 16:23). Even wise men can take their side with divisive and destructive leaders. In Ahithophel's case it was probably prompted by a sense of personal hurt and bitterness because of what David did to Ahithophel's granddaughter Bathsheba (2Sa 11:3; 2Sa 23:34).

c. **While he offered sacrifices:** Absalom was careful to keep up his religious practices, both for the sake of image and because he was deceived enough to think that God wanted to bless him.

d. **And the conspiracy grew strong:** Once some started coming to Absalom's side, it encouraged more and more to come. Momentum for division builds because others are doing it.

## **B. David escapes with the help of faithful friends.**

### *1. (13-18) David flees from Jerusalem.*

**Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee; or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword." And the king's servants said to the king, "We are your servants, ready to do whatever my lord the king commands." Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts. Then all his**

**servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king.**

a. **Arise, and let us flee; or we shall not escape from Absalom:** David knew well that Absalom was a ruthless man who valued power over principle. He didn't want the city of Jerusalem to become a battleground (**strike the city with the edge of the sword**), so he fled the city.

b. **The king's... the king... the king:** The writer here wanted to emphasize that *David* was **the king**, despite Absalom's treachery.

c. **The king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house:** David thought - and had reason to think - that these **ten woman** could be safely left behind. He felt he needed someone to look after the house.

i. Sadly, this also tells us that David had at least ten **concubines**. A concubine was essentially a legal mistress. In addition to David's many wives, this shows that David was a man who sometimes indulged his passions instead of restraining them in a godly way.

d. **All the Cherethites, all the Pelethites:** These men comprised David's personal bodyguard. **The Gittites** faithfully followed him from the time he lived among the Philistines (**who followed him from Gath**). These men who were faithful to David *before* he became successful also stuck with him when his success seemed to fade away.

i. It is remarkable that in this defining moment of his latter reign, *foreigners* rallied around David. It is more

remarkable - and tragic - that his own countrymen and his own family were nowhere to be found.

e. **Passed before the king:** As David watched this procession leave Jerusalem and head for safety, he was greatly pained. This was reflected in the Psalm that David wrote during this time.

i. David was afraid: *My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. And I said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."* (Psa 55:4-8)

ii. David put his trust in God: *LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God." But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the LORD with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.* (Psa 3:1-6)

iii. Psalms 41, 61, 62, , 63 were also written during this period.

2. (19-23) *David's faithful friends.*

**Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you *are* a foreigner and also an exile from your own place. In fact, you came *only* yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren**

**back. Mercy and truth be with you.” And Ittai answered the king and said, “As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be.” So David said to Ittai, “Go, and cross over.” Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who were with him crossed over. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness.**

a. **Why are you also going with us:** As David watched the procession of his faithful supporters, **Ittai the Gittite** caught his eye. David couldn’t understand why this newly arrived foreigner took the risk of such open loyalty to David.

b. **Return and remain with the king:** In calling Absalom **the king**, David showed that he would not cling to the throne. At that moment it seemed that Absalom would succeed, so David called him **the king** and left it unto the LORD.

c. **As my lord the king lives:** Ittai meant *David*, not *Absalom*. David told Ittai, “Remain with the king.” Ittai answered back, “That’s exactly what I intend to do - and you *are* the king.”

d. **Whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be:** Ittai was loyal to David when it looked certain that it would *cost* him something. True loyalty isn’t demonstrated until it is likely to *cost* something to be loyal.

i. “Remember, the more rebels there are, the more need for us to be conspicuously loyal to our King.”

(Maclaren)

ii. We learn a lot from Ittai's demonstration of loyalty.

- Ittai did it when David was down.
- Ittai did it decisively.
- Ittai did it voluntarily.
- Ittai did it having newly come to David.
- Ittai did it publicly.
- Ittai did it knowing that the fate of David became his fate.

iii. "If Ittai, charmed with David's person and character, though a foreigner and a stranger, felt that he could enlist beneath his banner for life - yea, and declared that he would do so there and then-how much more may you and I, if we know what Christ has done for us, and who He is and what He deserves at our hands, at this good hour plight our troth to Him and vow, 'As the Lord liveth, surely in whatsoever place my Lord and Savior shall be, whether in death or life, even there also shall His servant be.'" (Spurgeon)

iv. We must determine that wherever Jesus is, we will be also. He lives in the heavenlies, so will we be. He is with His church, so will we be. He is busy in His work, so will we be. He is with children, so will we be.

e. **Toward the way of the wilderness:** Many years before, David left the safety of Saul's palace to live as a fugitive. Those years in the wilderness prepared David to be king. God sent David out into **the wilderness** to continue the same work in his life.

i. "Ah! We do not like going over Kedron. When it comes to the pinch, how we struggle against

suffering, and especially against dishonor and slander! How many there were who would have gone on pilgrimage, but that Mr. Shame proved too much for them; they could not bear to go over the black brook Kedron, could not endure to be made nothing of for the sake of the Lord of glory, but they even turned back." (Spurgeon)

*3. (24-26) David's submission to God's chastening.*

**There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me *both* it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him."**

a. **Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God:** The priests were loyal to David, even though it probably meant death for them if Absalom succeeded. It was good that the men who should be spiritually sensitive to Absalom's evil and David's good were indeed sensitive to it.

b. **Carry the ark of God back into the city:** David trusted in God, not in the ark of the covenant. He was willing to let the ark go back to Jerusalem and to put his fate in God's hands.

c. **If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back... if He says thus: "I have no delight in you," here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him:** David's humble and chastened spirit proved he knew God dealt with him righteously. David submitted to God with an active submission, not a passive one.

4. (27-29) *David sends the priests back to gather information.*

**The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you *not* a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there.**

a. **Are you not a seer:** David recognized that Zadok was a prophet. A man of supernatural insight might be a valuable information source for David.

5. (30) *David on the Mount of Olives.*

**So David went up by the Ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who *were* with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.**

a. **David went up the Ascent of the Mount of Olives:** When Jesus went from the Last Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, He essentially traced these same steps of David. Both David and Jesus suffered for sin, but Jesus suffered for *our* sins and David suffered for his own.

b. **Wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot:** These were emblems of mourning. David was struck by the greatness of this tragedy for the nation, for his family, and for himself.

i. This wasn't a pity-party or soreness merely over the *consequences* of his sin. "He is crushed by the consciousness that his punishment is deserved - the bitter fruit of the sin that filled all his later life with



darkness. His courage and his buoyancy have left him." (Maclaren)

ii. "In light of all the facts it is almost certain that the tears David shed as he climbed Olivet, were rather those of humiliation and penitence, than those of self-centered regret. For Absalom there was no excuse, but David carried in his own heart ceaselessly the sense of his own past sin." (Morgan)

iii. This shows David was a redeemed man. Some would say that God let David off easy - that he deserved the death penalty for adultery and murder. If God forgave him and spared David that penalty, surely David would just do it again. Those who think this way do not understand how grace and forgiveness work in the heart of the redeemed. David's sin was ever before him - and in a strange combination of deep gratitude and horror over his forgiven sin, David never did it again.

6. (31-37) *David hears of Ahithophel's defection to Absalom.*

**Then *someone* told David, saying, "Ahithophel *is* among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"** Now it happened when David had come to the top *of the mountain*, where he worshiped God—there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. David said to him, "If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; *as I was your father's servant previously, so I will now also be your servant,*' then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. And *do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be that whatever you hear from the*

**king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Indeed *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear." So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.**

**a. Turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness:**

David knew that Ahithophel was normally a good advisor, but he prayed that he would give foolish counsel to Absalom.

i. "This was done accordingly: great is the power of faithful prayer. The queen-mother of Scotland was heard to say, that she more feared the prayers of John Knox than an army of fighting men." (Trapp)

**b. David had come to the top of the mountain, where he worshipped God:** David's life was in danger and he had to flee. Yet he took time to stop at the top of the Mount of Olives, look back upon Jerusalem and the tabernacle, and **he worshipped God**. David knew worship was always important and he could worship when circumstances were bad.

**b. Then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me:** David sent his other aide Hushai back to Jerusalem to frustrate Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom.

**c. Absalom came into Jerusalem:** Absalom came into Jerusalem as a cunning, wicked rebel. David came into Jerusalem as a brave, noble conqueror (2Sa 5:6-7). Jesus came into Jerusalem as a servant-king (Mat 21:4-10).

## **David and Ziba**

**2Sa 16:1** When David had gone a little beyond the top of the hill, he was suddenly met by Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who had with him a couple of donkeys loaded

with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred bunches of fresh fruit, and a leather bag full of wine.

2Sa 16:2 King David asked him, "What are you going to do with all that?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for Your Majesty's family to ride, the bread and the fruit are for the men to eat, and the wine is for them to drink when they get tired in the wilderness."

2Sa 16:3 "Where is Mephibosheth, the grandson of your master Saul?" the king asked him. "He is staying in Jerusalem," Ziba answered, "because he is convinced that the Israelites will now restore to him the kingdom of his grandfather Saul."

2Sa 16:4 The king said to Ziba, "Everything that belonged to Mephibosheth is yours." "I am your servant," Ziba replied. "May I always please Your Majesty!"

### **Shimei Curses David**

2Sa 16:5 When King David arrived at Bahurim, one of Saul's relatives, Shimei son of Gera, came out to meet him, cursing him as he came.

2Sa 16:6 Shimei started throwing stones at David and his officials, even though David was surrounded by his men and his bodyguards.

2Sa 16:7 Shimei cursed him and said, "Get out! Get out! Murderer! Criminal!"

2Sa 16:8 You took Saul's kingdom, and now the LORD is punishing you for murdering so many of Saul's family. The LORD has given the kingdom to your son Absalom, and you are ruined, you murderer!"

2Sa 16:9 Abishai, whose mother was Zeruiah, said to the king, "Your Majesty, why do you let this dog curse you? Let me go over there and cut off his head!"

2Sa 16:10 "This is none of your business," the king said to Abishai and his brother Joab. "If he curses me because the LORD told him to, who has the right to ask why he does it?"

2Sa 16:11 And David said to Abishai and to all his officials, "My own son is trying to kill me; so why should you be surprised at this Benjaminite? The LORD told him to curse; so leave him alone and let him do it.

2Sa 16:12 Perhaps the LORD will notice my misery and give me some blessings to take the place of his curse."

2Sa 16:13 So David and his men continued along the road. Shimei kept up with them, walking on the hillside; he was cursing and throwing stones and dirt at them as he went.

2Sa 16:14 The king and all his men were worn out when they reached the Jordan, and there they rested.

### **Absalom Enters Jerusalem**

2Sa 16:15 Absalom and all the Israelites with him entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with them.

2Sa 16:16 When Hushai, David's trusted friend, met Absalom, he shouted, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

2Sa 16:17 "What has happened to your loyalty to your friend David?" Absalom asked him. "Why didn't you go with him?"

2Sa 16:18 Hushai answered, "How could I? I am for the one chosen by the LORD, by these people, and by all the Israelites. I will stay with you.

2Sa 16:19 After all, whom should I serve, if not my master's son? As I served your father, so now I will serve you."

2Sa 16:20 Then Absalom turned to Ahithophel and said, "Now that we are here, what do you advise us to do?"

2Sa 16:21 Ahithophel answered, "Go and have intercourse with your father's concubines whom he left behind to take

care of the palace. Then everyone in Israel will know that your father regards you as his enemy, and your followers will be greatly encouraged."

2Sa 16:22 So they set up a tent for Absalom on the palace roof, and in the sight of everyone Absalom went in and had intercourse with his father's concubines.

2Sa 16:23 Any advice that Ahithophel gave in those days was accepted as though it were the very word of God; both David and Absalom followed it.

## **2 Samuel 16:1-23**

### **2 Samuel 16 - David Flees as Absalom Asserts His Reign**

#### **A. Ziba's deception.**

*1. (1-2) Ziba meets David with supplies.*

**When David was a little past the top of the mountain, there was Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine. And the king said to Ziba, "What do you mean to do with these?" So Ziba said, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who are faint in the wilderness to drink."**

a. **Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth:** This Ziba was the servant of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan to whom David showed great kindness to (2 Samuel 9).

b. **Who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys:** At a time of great need, Ziba met David with essential supplies. This was a generous and helpful gift from Ziba.

*2. (3-4) Ziba speaks against Mephibosheth.*

Then the king said, "And where *is* your master's son?" And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.'" So the king said to Ziba, "Here, all that *belongs* to Mephibosheth *is* yours." And Ziba said, "I humbly bow before you, *that* I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!"

a. **He is in Jerusalem:** Ziba told David that Mephibosheth was in Jerusalem, waiting to come to power after David and Absalom ruined each other. Ziba told David that Mephibosheth longed to restore the family of Saul to power. (**Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.**)

i. These were lies that Ziba told David and this will be revealed in 2Sa 19:24-30. Actually Ziba left Mephibosheth behind to make it *look* as if Mephibosheth did not support David.

ii. This report from Ziba hurt David, because in this time of crisis the last thing he needed to hear was that *another* friend had turned against him. Ziba "was utterly despicable, and the more so because at the moment the sorrow he brought to the heart of David was his feeling that his kindness toward Mephibosheth was ill requited." (Morgan)

iii. This was a "shameless and senseless slander, uttered by a false and faithless sycophant." (Trapp)

b. **All that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours:** David - acting on the only information he had - assumed that Ziba told the truth. Therefore, he rewarded Ziba's loyalty and punished Mephibosheth's reported disloyalty.

i. This was exactly the response Ziba wanted. Ziba was an example of someone who wickedly used a

crisis for his own benefit.

## **B. Shimei curses David.**

### *1. (5-8) Shimei curses a deposed king.*

**Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you *are caught* in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!"**

a. **A man from the family of the house of Saul:** Shimei was a distant relative of the former King Saul, and he still resented David for replacing the dynasty of Saul.

b. **Cursing continuously... threw stones... "You bloodthirsty man, you rogue":** Shimei was about as offensive as a person could be. He wanted to destroy any shred of dignity or confidence that David had left.

i. There are always people ready to rejoice when a leader falls. Shimei had this heart against David for a long time, but he could only show it when David was down and out.

ii. "It is very hard to bear a cowardly attack. One is very apt to reply and use hard words to one who takes advantage of your position and deals you the

coward's blow. Only the coward strikes a man when he is down." (Spurgeon)

**c. The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul... you are caught in your own evil:** A quick look at the outward appearance of things seemed to confirm Shimei's analysis, but Shimei was wrong. None of this came upon David because of what he did to Saul or Saul's family.

i. Shimei was wrong because David actually treated Saul and his family with great love and graciousness.

ii. Shimei was wrong because David was not a bloodthirsty man. It is true that he was a man of war, but not a bloodthirsty man.

iii. Shimei was wrong because David did not bring Saul and his family to ruin - Saul himself brought the family to ruin.

iv. Shimei was *right* that the LORD had brought this upon David, but not for any of the reasons Shimei thought.

*2. (9-14) David receives adversity with humility.*

**Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!" But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" And David said to Abishai and all his servants, "See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now *may this* Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him. It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day." And as**



**David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust. Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there.**

a. **Let me go over and take off his head:** Abishai didn't want to listen to Shimei curse or to dodge his stones any more. The mighty men surrounding David were more than ready to kill Shimei in an instant.

b. **So let him curse:** David didn't try to shut up Shimei. He didn't close his ears to unpleasant or critical words. David was willing to hear what God might say to him through a cursing critic.

i. David let Shimei speak because he was not a bloodthirsty man (**what have I to do with you**). Ironically, if David were the kind of man Shimei said he was, Shimei would be dead.

ii. David let Shimei speak because he saw the hand of God in every circumstance (**the LORD has said to him**). He knew that God was more than able to shut Shimei up; David didn't need to give the order.

iii. David let Shimei speak because he put the "Shimei problem" in perspective. (**See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite?**) David knew that his real problem was Absalom not Shimei, and he did not lose this perspective.

iv. David let Shimei speak because he knew that God's hand was on the future as well as the present. (**It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day**) David knew that if he did what

was right in the present moment, God would take care of the future.

c. **Let him alone, and let him curse:** "David could take this fellow's head off and that in a moment, and yet he said, 'Let him alone. Let him curse.' And this makes a splendid example. *If you can revenge yourself, DON'T.* If you could do it as easily as open your hand, keep it shut. If one bitter word could end the argument, ask for grace to spare that bitter word." (Spurgeon)

d. **So they refreshed themselves there:** David was not without hope or comfort. God allowed comfort to find him, even if it was in the small things. David was able to *receive* the comfort because he was at peace and he knew that God was in control of Israel.

i. In refusing to cling to the throne, David was like Jesus, *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Php 2:6-8).* "As we thus follow David through these days of humiliation and shame... we nevertheless understand more perfectly that he was indeed a man after God's own heart." (Morgan)

ii. In his book *A Tale of Three Kings*, Gene Edwards put these words into the mouth of David: "The throne is not mine. Not to have, not to take, not to protect, and not to keep. The throne is the LORD's." It was that kind of heart that kept David on-track through such a difficult time and enabled him to even be **refreshed**.

iii. "This is radiant illustration of the deep and inward peace given to any man who is living in fellowship

with God in motive and desire.” (Morgan)

### **C. Absalom’s counselors.**

*1. (15-19) Absalom receives Hushai as an advisor.*

**Meanwhile Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem; and Ahithophel was with him. And so it was, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, “Long live the king! Long live the king!” So Absalom said to Hushai, “Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?” And Hushai said to Absalom, “No, but whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel choose, his I will be, and with him I will remain. Furthermore, whom should I serve? *Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father’s presence, so will I be in your presence.*”**

**a. When Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, came to Absalom:** Hushai wanted to leave with David and support him (2Sa 15:32-34). David thought it was better to send Hushai back to Absalom, to both spy on Absalom and to give him bad advice.

i. The bad advice from Hushai was thought necessary because **Ahithophel was with** Absalom. Ahithophel was famous for his wise counsel, and David wanted someone on the inside of Absalom’s leadership who might frustrate Ahithophel’s counsel.

**b. As I have served in your father’s presence, so will I be in your presence:** Hushai lied to Absalom, concealing his motives - like any good spy hides his or her true intentions.

*2. (20-23) Absalom follows Ahithophel’s advice.*

**Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give counsel as to what we should do.” And Ahithophel said to Absalom,**

**“Go in to your father’s concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong.”** So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, *was* as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So *was* all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

a. **Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go into your father’s concubines”:** Ahithophel told Absalom to do something so offensive that it would eliminate any possibility of reconciliation with David. Ahithophel felt this strong statement would give courage to Absalom’s followers.

i. In the ancient world, taking the king’s concubines was not only an act of immorality; but also, an act of treason. This was a way for Absalom to not only *replace* David but also to completely *repudiate* his father.

ii. Why did Ahithophel give such radical advice? Because it made sense from his own self-interest. Ahithophel had the most to lose if Absalom failed to keep the throne or if David and Absalom reconciled. He would be revealed and rejected as a traitor.

iii. The Puritan commentator John Trapp wrote this of Ahithophel’s tongue, which gave this wicked advice: “O tongue worthy to have been cut out, shred in gobbets and driven down the throat of him that thus misused him, to the engaging of Absalom in such an unpardonable villainy, beside hazard of his immortal soul!”

**b. So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines:** This disgraceful act said a lot about *Absalom*, who actually did it. It also said a lot about *Ahithophel*, who must have had a strange sense of satisfaction in seeing David's women violated in a similar way to how his granddaughter Bathsheba was violated.

i. 2Sa 11:3 tells us that Bathsheba's father was **Eliam**, one of David's Mighty Men (2Sa 23:34). This also means that her grandfather was Ahithophel (according to 2Sa 23:34 and 2Sa 15:12).

ii. This shows the power of bitterness. Ahithophel was willing to see these women abused, Absalom grievously sin, and the kingdom of Israel suffer greatly - all simply to satisfy his bitter longing for revenge.

iii. This disgraceful incident also shows that God kept His promise to David: *I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun* (2Sa 12:11-12).

iv. "Every part of the conduct of Absalom shows him to have been a most profligate young man; he was proud, vindictive, adulterous, incestuous, a parricide, and in fine, reprobate to every good word and work." (Clarke)

**c. Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God:** Ahithophel had a well-deserved reputation for giving counsel almost as good as God. But in this case his counsel was foolish and destructive.

- i. It was foolish and destructive because it was motivated by bitterness. Bitterness has the power to turn our best qualities sour.
- ii. It was foolish and destructive because God answered David's prayer (2Sa 15:31) by prompting Ahithophel to give this foolish counsel, and in prompting Absalom to take the foolish counsel.
- iii. Strangely, Absalom thought he could establish his kingdom through immorality. He was a clever and skilled politician but ignorant about the ways of God.

### **Hushai Saves David**

**2Sa 17:1** Not long after that, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and tonight I will set out after David.

2Sa 17:2 I will attack him while he is tired and discouraged. He will be frightened, and all his men will run away. I will kill only the king

2Sa 17:3 and then bring back all his men to you, like a bride returning to her husband. You want to kill only one man; the rest of the people will be safe."

2Sa 17:4 This seemed like good advice to Absalom and all the Israelite leaders.

2Sa 17:5 Absalom said, "Now call Hushai, and let us hear what he has to say."

2Sa 17:6 When Hushai arrived, Absalom said to him, "This is the advice that Ahithophel has given us; shall we follow it? If not, you tell us what to do."

2Sa 17:7 Hushai answered, "The advice Ahithophel gave you this time is no good.

2Sa 17:8 You know that your father David and his men are hard fighters and that they are as fierce as a mother bear robbed of her cubs. Your father is an experienced soldier and does not stay with his men at night.

2Sa 17:9 Right now he is probably hiding in a cave or some other place. As soon as David attacks your men, whoever hears about it will say that your men have been defeated.

2Sa 17:10 Then even the bravest men, as fearless as lions, will be afraid because everyone in Israel knows that your father is a great soldier and that his men are hard fighters.

2Sa 17:11 My advice is that you bring all the Israelites together from one end of the country to the other, as many as the grains of sand on the seashore, and that you lead them personally in battle.

2Sa 17:12 We will find David wherever he is, and attack him before he knows what's happening. Neither he nor any of his men will survive.

2Sa 17:13 If he retreats into a city, our people will all bring ropes and just pull the city into the valley below. Not a single stone will be left there on top of the hill."

2Sa 17:14 Absalom and all the Israelites said, "Hushai's advice is better than Ahithophel's." The LORD had decided that Ahithophel's good advice would not be followed, so that disaster would come on Absalom.

2Sa 17:15 Then Hushai told the priests Zadok and Abiathar what advice he had given to Absalom and the Israelite leaders and what advice Ahithophel had given.

2Sa 17:16 Hushai added, "Quick, now! Send a message to David not to spend the night at the river crossings in the wilderness, but to cross the Jordan at once, so that he and his men won't all be caught and killed."

2Sa 17:17 Abiathar's son Jonathan and Zadok's son Ahimaaz were waiting at the spring of Enrogel, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, because they did not dare be seen entering the city. A servant woman would regularly go and tell them what was happening, and then they would go and tell King David.

2Sa 17:18 But one day a boy happened to see them, and he told Absalom; so they hurried off to hide in the house of a certain man in Bahurim. He had a well near his house, and they got down in it.

2Sa 17:19 The man's wife took a covering, spread it over the opening of the well and scattered grain over it, so that no one would notice anything.

2Sa 17:20 Absalom's officials came to the house and asked the woman, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" "They crossed the river," she answered. The men looked for them but could not find them, and so they returned to Jerusalem.

2Sa 17:21 After they left, Ahimaaz and Jonathan came up out of the well and went and reported to King David. They told him what Ahithophel had planned against him and said, "Hurry up and cross the river."

2Sa 17:22 So David and his men started crossing the Jordan, and by daybreak they had all gone across.

2Sa 17:23 When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and went back to his hometown. After putting his affairs in order, he hanged himself. He was buried in the family grave.

2Sa 17:24 David had reached the town of Mahanaim by the time Absalom and the Israelites had crossed the Jordan.

2Sa 17:25 (Absalom had put Amasa in command of the army in the place of Joab. Amasa was the son of Jether the Ishmaelite; his mother was Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and the sister of Joab's mother Zeruiah.)

2Sa 17:26 Absalom and his men camped in the land of Gilead.

2Sa 17:27 When David arrived at Mahanaim, he was met by Shobi son of Nahash, from the city of Rabbah in Ammon, and by Machir son of Ammiel, from Lodebar, and by Barzillai, from Rogelim in Gilead.



2Sa 17:28 (28-29) They brought bowls, clay pots, and bedding, and also food for David and his men: wheat, barley, meal, roasted grain, beans, peas, honey, cheese, cream, and some sheep. They knew that David and his men would get hungry, thirsty, and tired in the wilderness.

## **2 Samuel 17:1-29**

### **2 Samuel 17 - Absalom Decides His Direction**

#### **A. The advice of Ahithophel and of Hushai.**

##### *1. (1-4) The counsel of Ahithophel.*

**Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who *are* with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace."** And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

a. **I will arise and pursue David tonight:** Ahithophel advised a quick, selective attack against David only (**I will strike only the king**). He advised urgency, doing it all while David was still west of the Jordan River.

b. **I will strike only the king:** This slip of the tongue was more like an unknowing prophecy. Deep in his heart even Ahithophel knew that David was the real king.

c. **And the saying please Absalom and all the elders of Israel:** Ahithophel's plan was smart. It was bold and had a high probability of success and it would spare Israel a protracted civil war between the supporters of David and the supporters of Absalom.

##### *2. (5-10) Hushai disagrees with Ahithophel's advice.*

Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too." And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, "Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up." So Hushai said to Absalom: "The advice that Ahithophel has given *is* not good at this time." "For," said Hushai, "you know your father and his men, that they *are* mighty men, and they *are* enraged in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father *is* a man of war, and will not camp with the people. Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some *other* place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears *it* will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' And even he *who is* valiant, whose heart *is* like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father *is* a mighty man, and *those who are* with him *are* valiant men."

a. **Now call Hushai the Archite:** It is a remarkable evidence of the hand of God and answer to David's prayer in 2Sa 15:31 that Absalom even asked for another opinion after such wise, well-received counsel.

b. **The advice that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time:** We can imagine that Hushai's heart sank when heard of the smart plan Ahithophel suggested. He had to quickly think of a counter-plan so that he could defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, as David asked him to do in 2Sa 15:32-35.

c. **You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men:** Hushai spoke of the David of the *past*, not the David of the *present*. Hushai saw David with his own eyes and knew that he was not strong and mighty. He

hoped that Absalom would vividly remember the David of the past.

d. **Like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field... by now he is hidden in some pit:** Hushai knew David could barely keep himself together, but he effectively painted the picture that David and his men were dangerous and should not be attacked quickly.

e. **There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom:** Hushai's point is that it was too risky to attack David immediately. We can imagine that he said all this praying that God would indeed answer David's prayer and defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

3. (11-13) *Hushai advises Absalom to raise a huge army and get David in person.*

**"Therefore I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there."**

a. **I advise that all Israel be fully gathered:** This would take time. Hushai not only wanted to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, he also wanted to do whatever he could to buy David more time before the inevitable attack came.

b. **And that you go to battle in person:** This suggestion favored Absalom's vanity. He could prove that he was a mighty soldier like his father David. In

Ahithophel's plan *Ahithophel* led the battle; in Hushai's plan *Absalom* led the battle.

4. (14) *Absalom and the elders favor Hushai's advice.*

**So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel." For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom.**

a. **The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel:** This was the first time anyone said *this* - people always favored the advice of Ahithophel. One reason Absalom liked Hushai's advice was because it appealed to his vanity.

b. **The LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel:** This was the greater reason why the advice of Ahithophel was rejected. God was in control. The throne of Israel belonged to Him, and He could grant it or deny at *His* will.

i. Absalom had the smartest man in Israel on his side, but David's prayer was mightier than Ahithophel's smarts. God led Ahithophel to give foolish counsel that was listened to (as in 2Sa 16:20-23). God allowed Ahithophel to give great advice and yet have it be rejected. God was in control; **the LORD had purposed.**

ii. "This is one of the great principles of life which every page of the Bible emphasizes and illustrates. Men cannot escape God. They go their own way, but that way never sets them free from the authority and the invincible power of God." (Morgan)

iii. We see that the LORD **purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel** because *David prayed*. Prayer moves the hand of God, and David prayed: *O*

*Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness! (2Sa 15:31)*

**c. That the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom:**

In all of this there was a severe chastening for David, and he knew it. Yet God did not forsake David during this time of chastening. He was there for David at this time also. He was not out to *destroy* David, but to *correct* him.

**B. David is warned of Absalom's plan.**

*1. (15-16) Zadok sends his sons to tell David.*

**Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who *are* with him be swallowed up.'"**

**a. Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests:**

This is exactly what David had in mind when he sent Hushai and the priests back to Absalom (2Sa 15:35-36).

**b. Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over:** Hushai meant that David should **cross over** the Jordan River, giving him room and time to regroup before Absalom's attack.

*2. (17-22) David is warned.*

**Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city; so a female servant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom. But both of them went away quickly and came to a man's house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it. Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the**

thing was not known. And when Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where *are* Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" So the woman said to them, "They have gone over the water brook." And when they had searched and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem. Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, "Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel advised against you." So David and all the people who *were* with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan.

a. **A man's house in Bahurim:** Jonathan and Ahimaaz could find help along the way. The whole nation had not gone over to Absalom, especially since he publicly disgraced David's concubines.

b. **So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan:** Because of this successful intelligence operation, David escaped the immediate danger from Absalom.

### *3. (23) Ahithophel commits suicide.*

**Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.**

a. **When Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed:** Ahithophel did not kill himself over hurt feelings because his counsel was rejected. Instead, he was wise enough to know that under Hushai's plan Absalom would fail and Ahithophel would be implicated in the conspiracy. He knew all was lost.

**b. He put his household in order, and hanged himself:** Ahithophel committed suicide, and we know that suicide is a sin because it is self-murder and God commanded *you shall not murder* (Exo 20:13). Yet suicide should not be regarded as an unforgivable sin. Anyone who does commit suicide has given in to the lies and deceptions of Satan, whose purpose is to kill and destroy (Joh 10:10).

i. "Suicide is always the ultimate action of cowardice. In the case of Saul, and in many similar cases, it is perfectly natural; but let it never be glorified as heroic. It is the last resort of the man who dare not stand up to life." (Morgan)

ii. "I desire to call your attention to the text on account of its very remarkable character. `

*He put his house in order, and hanged himself.* 'To put his house in order, showed that he was a prudent man; to hang himself, proved that he was a fool. Herein is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, mind and madness. Shall a man have wisdom enough to arrange his worldly affairs with care, and yet shall he be so hapless as to take his own life afterwards?" (Spurgeon)

iii. "Thousands set their houses in order, but destroy their souls; they look well to their flocks and their herds, but not to their hearts' best interests. They gather broken shells with continuous industry, but they throw away priceless diamonds. They exercise forethought, prudence, care, everywhere but where they are most required. They save their money, but squander their happiness; they are guardians of their estates, but suicides of their souls." (Spurgeon)

4. (24-26) *Absalom crosses the Jordan to pursue David.*

**Then David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. This Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.**

a. **Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him:** Now Absalom was the head of Israel's army. This was good for Absalom's vanity, but bad for success on the battlefield.

i. "Absalom's vanity ensured his ruin." (Morgan)

b. **Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab:** Amasa was the son of a niece of David and a cousin of Joab.

5. (27-29) *David finds supporters in Gilead.*

**Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched *grain* and beans, lentils and parched *seeds*, honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who *were* with him to eat. For they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."**

a. **Shobi... Machir... Barzillai:** These otherwise obscure men are given special mention because they helped David in a time of great need. Friends in need are friends indeed.

b. **The people are hungry and weary and thirst in the wilderness:** These helpers of David were not



dramatic warriors, but they helped David in this crisis as much as the bravest soldier. They were specially sent by God to comfort David in his affliction.

i. "It was as though God stooped over that stricken soul, and as the blows of the rod cut long furrows in the sufferer's back, the balm of Gilead was poured into the gaping wounds. Voices spoke more gently; hands touched his more softly; pitiful compassion rained tender assurances about his path; and, better than all, the bright-harnessed angels of God's protection encamped about his path and his lying down." (Meyer)

### **Absalom Killed**

**2Sa 18:1** King David brought all his men together, divided them into units of a thousand and of a hundred, and placed officers in command of them.

2Sa 18:2 Then he sent them out in three groups, with Joab and Joab's brother Abishai and Ittai from Gath, each in command of a group. And the king said to his men, "I will go with you myself."

2Sa 18:3 "You mustn't go with us," they answered. "It won't make any difference to the enemy if the rest of us turn and run, or even if half of us are killed; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It will be better if you stay here in the city and send us help."

2Sa 18:4 "I will do whatever you think best," the king answered. Then he stood by the side of the gate as his men marched out in units of a thousand and of a hundred.

2Sa 18:5 He gave orders to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: "For my sake don't harm the young man Absalom." And all the troops heard David give this command to his officers.

2Sa 18:6 David's army went out into the countryside and fought the Israelites in Ephraim Forest.

2Sa 18:7 The Israelites were defeated by David's men; it was a terrible defeat, with twenty thousand men killed that day.

2Sa 18:8 The fighting spread over the countryside, and more men died in the forest than were killed in battle.

2Sa 18:9 Suddenly Absalom met some of David's men. Absalom was riding a mule, and as it went under a large oak tree, Absalom's head got caught in the branches. The mule ran on and Absalom was left hanging in midair.

2Sa 18:10 One of David's men saw him and reported to Joab, "Sir, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree!"

2Sa 18:11 Joab answered, "If you saw him, why didn't you kill him on the spot? I myself would have given you ten pieces of silver and a belt."

2Sa 18:12 But the man answered, "Even if you gave me a thousand pieces of silver, I wouldn't lift a finger against the king's son. We all heard the king command you and Abishai and Ittai, 'For my sake don't harm the young man Absalom.'

2Sa 18:13 But if I had disobeyed the king and killed Absalom, the king would have heard about it—he hears about everything—and you would not have defended me."

2Sa 18:14 "I'm not going to waste any more time with you," Joab said. He took three spears and plunged them into Absalom's chest while he was still alive, hanging in the oak tree.

2Sa 18:15 Then ten of Joab's soldiers closed in on Absalom and finished killing him.

2Sa 18:16 Joab had the trumpet blown to stop the fighting, and his troops came back from pursuing the Israelites.

2Sa 18:17 They took Absalom's body, threw it into a deep pit in the forest, and covered it with a huge pile of stones. All the Israelites fled to their own hometowns.

2Sa 18:18 During his lifetime Absalom had built a monument for himself in King's Valley, because he had no son to keep his name alive. So he named it after himself, and to this day it is known as Absalom's Monument.

### **David Hears of Absalom's Death**

2Sa 18:19 Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said to Joab, "Let me run to the king with the good news that the LORD has saved him from his enemies."

2Sa 18:20 "No," Joab said, "today you will not take any good news. Some other day you may do so, but not today, for the king's son is dead."

2Sa 18:21 Then he said to his Ethiopian slave, "Go and tell the king what you have seen." The slave bowed and ran off.

2Sa 18:22 Ahimaaz insisted, "I don't care what happens; please let me take the news also." "Why do you want to do it, my son?" Joab asked. "You will get no reward for it."

2Sa 18:23 "Whatever happens," Ahimaaz said again, "I want to go." "Then go," Joab said. So Ahimaaz ran off down the road through the Jordan Valley, and soon he passed the slave.

2Sa 18:24 David was sitting in the space between the inner and outer gates of the city. The lookout went up to the top of the wall and stood on the roof of the gateway; he looked out and saw a man running alone.

2Sa 18:25 He called down and told the king, and the king said, "If he is alone, he is bringing good news." The runner kept coming closer.

2Sa 18:26 Then the lookout saw another man running alone, and he called down to the gatekeeper, "Look! There's another man running!" The king answered, "This one also is bringing good news."

2Sa 18:27 The lookout said, "I can see that the first man runs like Ahimaaz." "He's a good man," the king said, "and

he is bringing good news."

2Sa 18:28 Ahimaaz called out a greeting to the king, threw himself down to the ground before him, and said, "Praise the LORD your God, who has given you victory over the men who rebelled against Your Majesty!"

2Sa 18:29 "Is the young man Absalom all right?" the king asked. Ahimaaz answered, "Sir, when your officer Joab sent me, I saw a great commotion, but I couldn't tell what it was."

2Sa 18:30 "Stand over there," the king told him; and he went over and stood there.

### **David's Grief**

2Sa 18:31 Then the Ethiopian slave arrived and said to the king, "I have good news for Your Majesty! Today the LORD has given you victory over all who rebelled against you!"

2Sa 18:32 "Is the young man Absalom all right?" the king asked. The slave answered, "I wish that what has happened to him would happen to all your enemies, sir, and to all who rebel against you."

2Sa 18:33 The king was overcome with grief. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he cried, "O my son! My son Absalom! Absalom, my son! If only I had died in your place, my son! Absalom, my son!"

## **2 Samuel 18:1-33**

### **2 Samuel 18 - The Defeat of Absalom**

#### **A. Absalom's defeat and death.**

*1. (1-4) David puts the army under three captains.*

**And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's**

brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I also will surely go out with you myself." But the people answered, "You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But *you are* worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city." Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands.

a. **David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains:** David knew just what to do in organizing his army. He set them into three divisions under the leadership of Joab, Abishai and Ittai the Gittite.

b. **I also will surely go out with you:** David knew that the commander belonged out in the battle. He didn't want to repeat his previous mistake of not going to battle when he should have (2Sa 11:1).

c. **You shall not go out:** The people surrounding David would not allow him to go out to battle with the rest of his army. There were three reasons why they insisted on this:

- His life was more valuable (**you are worth ten thousand of us**).
- He could bring reserves if needed (**you are now more help to us in the city**).
- They understood that it would be hard for David to fight against his own son Absalom.

d. **Whatever seems best to you I will do:** David was not stubborn. He knew how to submit to the good advice of others. He did not give up leadership; he practiced

good leadership by listening to the wise advice of the people around him.

**e. So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands:**

They were willing to take on sacrifice and danger for the benefit of their king. Their devotion to David is an example of how the believer should be devoted to the King of Kings, Jesus Christ.

*2. (5) David's command to the three captains.*

**Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom.**

**a. Now the king had commanded:** David wanted it clearly known that Absalom was to be captured alive and should not be mistreated in any way.

**b. All the people heard:** David gave this commandment in the presence of all the people so that the captains would feel greater pressure to do what David commanded.

*3. (6-8) Absalom's armies are defeated.*

**So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim. The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took place there that day. For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.**

**a. So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel:** Those loyal to David fought **against Israel**, because Israel was not loyal to David. Israel was seduced by Absalom's charisma and power.

**b. The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David:** The experienced leadership of David and his captains was probably the main reason for their overwhelming victory.

i. "David had arranged that the battle should take place in this terrain, where the experience and courage of each individual soldier counted more than sheer numbers." (Baldwin)

**c. The woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured:** This phrase implies that God fought for David in unusual ways. Soldiers loyal to Absalom seemed to be "swallowed up" by the woods.

i. "Perishing not only by the sword, but among the thick oaks and tangled briers of the wood, which concealed fearful precipices and great caverns, into which the rebels plunged in their wild fright when the rout set in." (Spurgeon)

ii. "It is generally supposed that, when the army was broken, the betook themselves to the wood, fell into pits, swamps, and so forth, and being entangled, were hewn down by David's men; but the *Chaldee*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, state that they were *devoured* by *wild beasts* in the wood." (Clarke)

4. (9-17) *Joab kills Absalom.*

**Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which was under him went on. Now a certain man saw *it* and told Joab, and said, "I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!" So Joab said to the man who told him, "You just saw *him*! And why did you not strike him there to**

the ground? I would have given you ten *shekels* of silver and a belt." But the man said to Joab, "Though I were to receive a thousand *shekels* of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware lest anyone *touch* the young man Absalom!' Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against *me*." Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was *still* alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him. So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people. And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent.

a. **Absalom rode on a mule:** Absalom's vanity put him in this battle, against the wise counsel of Ahithophel (2Sa 17:1-14). Absalom didn't seem like a great general, riding **a mule** into battle.

b. **His head caught in the terbinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth:** Absalom was noted for his good looks and his luxurious hair (2Sa 14:25-26). What was his glory was now his curse - Absalom was literally caught by his own hair in the thick trees of the forest.

i. Adam Clarke is careful to point out that the text does not say that Absalom was caught by his hair - we assume that. It may be that he was caught by his neck. Nevertheless, the image remains of Absalom



hanging in the tree: "So he hung between heaven and earth, as rejected of both." (Trapp)

ii. "Absalom's end was beset with terrors. When he was caught in the branches of the oak-tree, he was about to sever his hair with a sword stroke, but suddenly he saw hell yawning beneath him, and he preferred to hang in the tree to throwing himself into the abyss alive. Absalom's crime was, indeed, of a nature to deserve the supreme torture, for which reason he is one of the few Jews who have no portion in the world to come." (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*)

**c. I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree:**

When this was reported to Joab, the general wondered why the man did not immediately kill Absalom. The man replied that he did not do it out of obedience and faithfulness to David.

i. Joab insisted he would give both money and a promotion for the one who killed Absalom (**I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt**). Yet the man would not do it out of loyalty to David.

ii. "The military belt was the chief ornament of a soldier, and was highly prized in all ancient nations; it was also a rich present from one chieftain to another." (Clarke)

**d. He took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart:**

Joab didn't hesitate to strike Absalom, though he knew David commanded him not to. Joab was convinced that it was in David's best interest and in Israel's best interest to show Absalom justice, not mercy.

i. Absalom only received what he deserved. He was a murderer, a traitor, and a rapist. Joab knew that

David was generally indulgent towards his children and would never punish Absalom. "He had seen David's action toward his sons characterized by lack of discipline. In the highest interests of the kingdom his hand was raised to slay Absalom." (Morgan)

ii. We might say that Joab was *correct* but not *right*. He was *correct* in understanding that it was better for David and for Israel that Absalom was dead. He was *not right* in disobeying King David, the God-appointed authority over him. By David's dealings with King Saul, we see that God can deal with those in authority, and we don't need to disobey them unless commanded to by Scripture or a clear conscience.

iii. "Long ago he should have died by the hand of justice; and now all his crimes are visited on him in his last act of rebellion. Yet, in the present circumstances, Joab's act was base and disloyal, and a cowardly murder." (Clarke)

iv. At the same time, there is an ironic twist in that the rebel Absalom had his life taken in a rebellious act by Joab. Absalom got what he deserved and Joab would be held accountable for what he did to Absalom, both by God and eventually by David (1Ki 2:5-6).

**e. Ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him:**

Absalom was still not dead after three spears because *heart* is a general reference to the middle of the body instead of the specific internal organ.

i. "As he had defiled his father's ten concubines, so by these ten youngsters he hath that little breath that was left in him beaten out of his body." (Trapp)

f. **They took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him:** Joab wanted to make sure that Absalom's body was not memorialized as an inspiration to other followers or future rebels.

g. **All Israel fled, everyone to his tent:** This means Absalom's army was in full retreat. David's forces completely carried the day.

5. (18) *Absalom's pillar.*

**Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which *is* in the King's Valley. For he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.**

a. **Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself:** This is what we would expect from a self-centered, self-promoting man like Absalom. Joab made sure that Absalom did not have a memorial in death, but Absalom made himself a memorial in life.

b. **I have no son to keep my name in remembrance:** Absalom did have three sons (2Sa 14:27). From this statement we surmise that they died before their father did.

**B. David hears of Absalom's death.**

1. (19-27) *Two runners are sent to tell David the outcome of the battle.*

**Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the LORD has avenged him of his enemies." And Joab said to him, "You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead." Then Joab**

said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran. And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." So Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready?" "But whatever happens," *he said*, "let me run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite. Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a man, running alone. Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, "If he *is* alone, *there is* news in his mouth." And he came rapidly and drew near. Then the watchman saw *another* man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "There is *another* man, running alone!" And the king said, "He also brings news." So the watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He *is* a good man, and comes with good news."

a. **You shall not take the news this day:** Ahimaaz wanted to take David the news of Israel's victory and Absalom's death. But Joab wanted to spare Ahimaaz the son of Zadok the burden of being the messenger of bad news.

b. **Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite:** Ahimaaz was faster than the other runner. Since the messenger was someone David knew (**Ahimaaz**), he assumed it was good news (**He is a good man, and comes with good news**).

2. (28-32) *David learns of Absalom's death from the Cushite, who arrives after Ahimaaz.*

**And Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, "Blessed *be* the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!" The king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant and *me* your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what *it was about*." And the king said, "Turn aside *and* stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. Just then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "There is good news, my lord the king! For the LORD has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you." And the king said to the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" So the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like *that* young man!"**

a. **Is the young man Absalom safe:** This was David's only concern. He should have been more concerned for Israel as a nation than for his traitor son. At the same time, David's question is an example of the great bond of love between parent and child, and between God our Father and His children.

i. "He might have said, 'Is the young man Absalom dead? For if he is out of the way there will be peace to my realm, and rest to my troubled life.' But no, he is a father, and he must love his own offspring. It is a father that speaks, and a father's love can survive the enmity of a son." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Our children may plunge into the worst of sins, but they are our children still. They may scoff at our God; they may tear our heart to pieces with their wickedness; we cannot take complacency in them, but

at the same time we cannot unchild them, nor erase their image from our hearts.” (Spurgeon)

b. **I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was about:** Compared to the Cushite, Ahimaaz was a better runner but a worse messenger because he didn’t know his message. A message can be delivered beautifully, but the messenger’s first responsibility is to get the message correct.

c. **May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young man:** Without saying it directly, the Cushite told David that Absalom was dead.

### 3. (33) *David’s great mourning.*

**Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: “O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!”**

a. **The king was deeply moved:** The Hebrew idea of **deeply moved** implies a violent trembling of the body. David felt completely undone at hearing the news of Absalom’s death.

i. In part, David was so **deeply moved** because he knew that he supplied the soil this tragedy grew from.

- The soil came from David’s indulgent parenting.

- The soil came from David’s sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, after which God promised David: *The sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife... I will raise up adversity against you from your own house (2Sa 12:10-11).*

- The soil came from David's own sinful indulgence of his passions and smaller rebellions against God, which sins and weaknesses were magnified in his sons.

- ii. David's sorrow shows us that it isn't enough that parents train their children to be godly; they must first train *themselves* in godliness. "We cannot stand in the presence of that suffering without learning the solemn lessons of parental responsibility it has to teach, not merely in training our children, but in that earlier training of ourselves for their sakes." (Morgan)

**b. O my son Absalom; my son, my son Absalom:**

David mourned so much for Absalom because he really was *his* son. David saw his sins, his weaknesses, his rebellion exaggerated in Absalom.

- i. "Everything in the story leads up to, and culminates in, this wail of anguish over his dead boy... Five times he repeated the words, 'my son.'" (Morgan)

- ii. "This surely had a deeper note in it than that of the merely half-conscious repetition of words occasioned by personal grief. The father recognized how much he was responsible for the son. It is as though he had said: He is indeed my son, his weaknesses are my weaknesses, his passions are my passions, his sins are my sins." (Morgan)

**c. If only I had died in your place:** David wanted to die in the place of his rebellious son. What David could not do God did by dying in the place of rebellious sinners.

- i. "So in the cry of David, we actually hear the cry of God, for His lost children. His desire to restore, His desire to forgive." (Smith)

## **Joab Rebukes David**

**2Sa 19:1** Joab was told that King David was weeping and mourning for Absalom.

2Sa 19:2 And so the joy of victory was turned into sadness for all of David's troops that day, because they heard that the king was mourning for his son.

2Sa 19:3 They went back into the city quietly, like soldiers who are ashamed because they are running away from battle.

2Sa 19:4 The king covered his face and cried loudly, "O my son! My son Absalom! Absalom, my son!"

2Sa 19:5 Joab went to the king's house and said to him, "Today you have humiliated your men—the men who saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and of your wives and concubines.

2Sa 19:6 You oppose those who love you and support those who hate you! You have made it clear that your officers and men mean nothing to you. I can see that you would be quite happy if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead.

2Sa 19:7 Now go and reassure your men. I swear by the LORD's name that if you don't, not one of them will be with you by tomorrow morning. That would be the worst disaster you have suffered in all your life."



## **David Returns to Jerusalem**

2Sa 19:8 Then the king got up, and went and sat near the city gate. His men heard that he was there, and they all gathered around him. Meanwhile all the Israelites had fled to their own hometowns.

2Sa 19:9 All over the country they started quarreling among themselves. "King David saved us from our enemies," they said to one another. "He rescued us from the Philistines, but now he has fled from Absalom and left the country.

2Sa 19:10 We anointed Absalom as our king, but he has been killed in battle. So why doesn't somebody try to bring King David back?"

2Sa 19:11 The news of what the Israelites were saying reached King David. So he sent the priests Zadok and Abiathar to ask the leaders of Judah, "Why should you be the last to help bring the king back to his palace?

2Sa 19:12 You are my relatives, my own flesh and blood; why should you be the last to bring me back?"

2Sa 19:13 David also told them to say to Amasa, "You are my relative. From now on I am putting you in charge of the army in place of Joab. May God strike me dead if I don't!"

2Sa 19:14 David's words won the complete loyalty of all the men of Judah, and they sent him word to return with all his officials.

2Sa 19:15 On his way back the king was met at the Jordan River by the men of Judah, who had come to Gilgal to escort him across the river.

## **David Pardons His Enemies**

2Sa 19:16 At the same time the Benjaminite Shimei son of Gera from Bahurim hurried to the Jordan to meet King David.

2Sa 19:17 He had with him a thousand men from the tribe of Benjamin. And Ziba, the servant of Saul's family, also came with his fifteen sons and twenty servants, and they arrived at the Jordan before the king.

2Sa 19:18 They crossed the river to escort the royal party across and to do whatever the king wanted. As the king was getting ready to cross, Shimei threw himself down in front of him

2Sa 19:19 and said, "Your Majesty, please forget the wrong I did that day you left Jerusalem. Don't hold it against me or think about it any more.

2Sa 19:20 I know, sir, that I have sinned, and this is why I am the first one from the northern tribes to come and meet Your Majesty today."

2Sa 19:21 Abishai son of Zeruiah spoke up: "Shimei should be put to death because he cursed the one whom the LORD chose as king."

2Sa 19:22 But David said to Abishai and his brother Joab, "Who asked your opinion? Are you going to give me trouble? I am the one who is king of Israel now, and no Israelite will be put to death today."

2Sa 19:23 And he said to Shimei, "I give you my word that you will not be put to death."

2Sa 19:24 Then Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, came down to meet the king. He had not washed his feet, trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes from the time the king left Jerusalem until he returned victorious.

2Sa 19:25 When Mephibosheth arrived from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, "Mephibosheth, you didn't go with me. Why not?"

2Sa 19:26 He answered, "As you know, Your Majesty, I am crippled. I told my servant to saddle my donkey so that I could ride along with you, but he betrayed me.

2Sa 19:27 He lied about me to Your Majesty, but you are like God's angel, so do what seems right to you.

2Sa 19:28 All of my father's family deserved to be put to death by Your Majesty, but you gave me the right to eat at your table. I have no right to ask for any more favors from Your Majesty."

2Sa 19:29 The king answered, "You don't have to say anything more. I have decided that you and Ziba will share Saul's property."

2Sa 19:30 "Let Ziba have it all," Mephibosheth answered. "It's enough for me that Your Majesty has come home safely."

2Sa 19:31 Barzillai, from Gilead, had also come down from Rogelim to escort the king across the Jordan.

2Sa 19:32 Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years old. He was very rich and had supplied the king with food while he was staying at Mahanaim.

2Sa 19:33 The king said to him, "Come with me to Jerusalem, and I will take care of you."

2Sa 19:34 But Barzillai answered, "I don't have long to live; why should I go with Your Majesty to Jerusalem?"

2Sa 19:35 I am already eighty years old, and nothing gives me pleasure any more. I can't taste what I eat and drink, and I can't hear the voices of singers. I would only be a burden to Your Majesty.

2Sa 19:36 I don't deserve such a great reward. So I will go just a little way with you beyond the Jordan.

2Sa 19:37 Then let me go back home and die near my parents' grave. Here is my son Chimham, who will serve you; take him with you, Your Majesty, and do for him as you think best."

2Sa 19:38 The king answered, "I will take him with me and do for him whatever you want. And I will do for you anything you ask."

2Sa 19:39 Then David and all of his men crossed the Jordan. He kissed Barzillai and gave him his blessing, and Barzillai went back home.

2Sa 19:40 When the king had crossed, escorted by all the people of Judah and half the people of Israel, he went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went with him.

2Sa 19:41 Then all the Israelites went to the king and said to him, "Your Majesty, why did our brothers, the men of Judah, think they had the right to take you away and escort you, your family, and your men across the Jordan?"

2Sa 19:42 The men of Judah answered, "We did it because the king is one of us. So why should this make you angry? He hasn't paid for our food nor has he given us anything."

2Sa 19:43 The Israelites replied, "We have ten times as many claims on King David as you have, even if he is one of you. Why do you look down on us? Don't forget that we were the first to talk about bringing the king back!" But the men of Judah were more violent in making their claims than the men of Israel.

## **2 Samuel 19:1-43**

### **2 Samuel 19 - The Kingdom Is Restored to David**

#### **A. David's mourning and Joab's rebuke.**

*1. (1-3) The effect of David's grief upon his loyal supporters.*

**And Joab was told, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." So the victory that day was *turned* into mourning for all the people. For the people heard it said that day, "The king is grieved for his son." And the people stole back into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.**

**a. The victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people:** This was not good. David's loyal and

sacrificing supporters won that day for the glory of God and the good of Israel. Then they felt bad about the victory because David was overcome with excessive **weeping and mourning for Absalom**.

i. There is such a thing as excessive mourning - mourning that is basically rooted in unbelief and self indulgence. In 1Th 4:13, Paul warned Christians: *I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope*. Some Christians sorrow at times in death or tragedy like those who have *no hope* in God and this is wrong to do.

ii. "If your dear ones are dead you cannot restore them to life by your unbelief; and if they still survive, it will be a pity to be downcast and unbelieving when there is no occasion for it. 'Your strength is to sit still.' Remember that you are a Christian, and a Christian is expected to be more self-possessed than those who have no God to fly to." (Spurgeon)

b. **The people stole back into the city that day, as people who are ashamed:** David's excessive sorrow made his loyal friends and supporter feel **ashamed** they won a great victory.

2. (4-7) *Joab rebukes David.*

**But the king covered his face, and the king cried out with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, "Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines, in that you love your enemies and hate your friends. For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all**

**of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well. Now therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now."**

**a. O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son:**

David could not stop singing this song. He was still locked into his excessive mourning and lack of perspective. He was mastered by his feelings, and feelings were never meant to master us.

i. God is not *against* feelings - not at all. Many Christians lack deep and profound feeling and experience in their walk with God. At the same time, feelings were never meant to master over us.

ii. David's problem was not in what he *knew* - Absalom's tragic death and David's own role in it. David's problem was in what he *forgot* - that God was still in control, that a great victory was won, that he had many loyal supporters, and that God showed great grace and mercy to David. When someone is overcome in tragedy or sorrow, the problem is not in what they *know*, but in what they *forget*.

iii. "Who ever heard David cry out in godly sorrow, O Uriah, would God I had died for thee!" (Trapp)

**b. Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life:** Joab gave David a stern wake-up call. "David, your excessive mourning is selfish. It isn't all about you. These loyal, sacrificial supporters of yours deserve to feel good about their victory and you are making them feel terrible. Snap out of it."

**c. I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you**

**well:** This is a sharp truth delivered with precision. Joab wanted David not only to see that he was *foolish* in his excessive grief, but he was also *selfish*.

**d. Now therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants:** "Go out and encourage the team - they deserve it. If you don't you will lose most of them."

3. (8) *David receives Joab's rebuke.*

**Then the king arose and sat in the gate. And they told all the people, saying, "There is the king, sitting in the gate." So all the people came before the king. For everyone of Israel had fled to his tent.**

**a. Then the king arose and sat in the gate:** David didn't *feel* like doing this. His *feelings* told him to stay locked into his excessive mourning. Yet David let his understanding of what was *right* be bigger than what he *felt*.

i. We never again hear David crying out, "*O Absalom*." Doing what he needed to do got that song out of his head.

**b. So all the people came before the king:** This is what they needed to see - David sitting as king in the place of authority (**sitting in the gate**). This told them that their sacrifice was worth it, that it was appreciated, and that David would continue to reign. Joab's rebuke worked because Joab cared enough to say it, and David was wise enough to receive it.

## **B. Israel returns to David.**

1. (9-10) *The tribes debate receiving David back as king.*

**Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king saved us from the hand of our enemies, he delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the**

**land because of Absalom. But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing back the king?"**

**a. All the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel:** David survived Absalom's attempted overthrow, but the kingdom was not yet restored to David.

**b. The king saved us... But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died:** The tribes of Israel understood what David did for them, they understood that they rejected him and embraced Absalom, and they understood that Absalom was now dead. It left the people of Israel **in a dispute** about **bringing back the king**.

i. They only seemed to want David back after the false king Absalom failed. In the same way, we often only decide to bring back King Jesus when our false kings fail.

ii. "The folly of their allegiance to Absalom was clear - it had brought only misery and confusion. They were on the wrong side; they had rejected their true king, and therefore the situation was full of unrest."  
(Redpath)

*2. (11-14) David sends negotiators to the tribes.*

**So King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, "Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, to his very house? You *are* my brethren, you *are* my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?' And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if**



**you are not commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.” So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah, just as *the heart of one man*, so that they sent *this word* to the king: “Return, you and all your servants!”**

**a. Why are you the last to bring the king back to his very house:** David would not *force* his reign on Israel. He would only come back if the tribes who rejected him for Absalom agreed to **bring back the king**.

i. “David didn’t lift a finger to re-establish his authority... His return to sovereignty was decided by the voluntary submission of his kinsmen and by their loving obedience to his will.” (Redpath)

**b. Amasa... commander of the army... in place of Joab:** David agreed to replace Joab with Amasa, who was the captain of Absalom’s army. This was to put Joab in his place and to offer a gesture of reconciliation to the former supporters of Absalom.

**c. So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah, just as the heart of one man:** The efforts of Zadok and Abiathar succeeded. David would not come back until welcomed by the **hearts of all**, and that could not be *forced* - their hearts had to be **swayed**.

i. God will not force His reign on us. We must welcome His reign and He will not force our heart response. Our hearts must be **swayed** by the work of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

ii. **Just as the heart of one man:** David wanted the reception to be *unanimous*. The men of Judah responded together to the wooing work of Zadok and Abiathar.

*3. (15-18a) David comes over the Jordan River, helped by Judah and Benjamin.*

**Then the king returned and came to the Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to escort the king across the Jordan. And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, who was from Bahurim, hastened and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. *There were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over the Jordan before the king. Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good.**

a. **Then the king returned:** The point is emphasized - David would not return as king until he was welcomed, until hearts were swayed to receive him.

b. **To escort the king:** David left Israel as a desperate fugitive, rejected by the nation and hunted by his son Absalom. He came back escorted by thousands of enthusiastic supporters.

### **C. David's kindness to his subjects.**

*1. (18b-23) David shows forgiveness to Shimei.*

**Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan. Then he said to the king, "Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take *it* to heart. For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king." But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?"**

**And David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I *am* king over Israel?" Therefore the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king swore to him.**

a. **I, your servant, know that I have sinned:** Shimei showed a remarkably humble, contrite confession. He sinned greatly against David, and here he repented greatly before him.

i. Shimei's repentance was humble (**fell down before the king**). His posture represented his low place before David.

ii. Shimei's repentance honored David (**Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me**). He knew David had the right to **impute iniquity**, but he pleaded for mercy.

iii. Shimei's repentance was honest (**I have sinned**). He made no attempt to minimize his actions.

iv. Shimei's repentance was put into action (**here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king**). Real repentance will show itself not only in words and ideas, but also in *action*.

b. **The king said to Shimei, "You shall not die":** David spared the life of Shimei, showing forgiveness to the man who formerly bitterly cursed him (2Sa 16:5-13).

i. "Perhaps you have been like Shimei, who cursed king David, and you are afraid that Jesus will never forgive you. But David forgave Shimei, and Jesus is ready to forgive you. He delighteth in mercy. I do believe that the harps of heaven never give to Christ

such happiness as he has when he forgives the ungodly, and saith, 'Thy sins are forgiven; go in peace.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **Do I not know that today I am king over Israel:**

David could readily forgive a man who deserved to die because he was *secure*, knowing that *God* gave him the throne. Insecurity is a great motivator for revenge and holding on to bitterness.

2. (24-30) *David shows understanding to Mephibosheth.*

**Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace. So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?" And he answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,' because your servant *is* lame. And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king, but my lord the king *is* like the angel of God. Therefore do *what is* good in your eyes. For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?" So the king said to him, "Why do you speak anymore of your matters? I have said, 'You and Ziba divide the land.'" Then Mephibosheth said to the king, "Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house."**

a. **Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king:** Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan and the last surviving heir to the dynasty of Saul. 2

Samuel 9 told how David showed unique kindness to Mephibosheth. 2Sa 16:1-4 described how Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met David with supplies as he left Jerusalem. Ziba said that Mephibosheth abandoned David and hoped to gain from the conflict between David and Absalom.

b. **My lord, O king, my servant deceived me:** Mephibosheth explained why he did not join David, and how Ziba **slandered** him before David.

c. **You set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king:** Though Mephibosheth was slandered before David, Mephibosheth didn't defend himself or demand a hearing before David. He knew David already gave him more than he deserved, so if David were to now take it all away he would still be ahead.

d. **You and Ziba divide the land:** When Ziba told David that Mephibosheth abandoned him, David granted Ziba all of Mephibosheth's land and property (2Sa 16:4). Hearing the whole story, David didn't go back on his promise to Ziba even though it was made under fraudulent circumstances. Yet he did lessen Ziba's reward by offering a split between Ziba and Mephibosheth of all the property from Saul's house.

e. **Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house:** Mephibosheth was content to let Ziba have all the property if he could only know that David reigned. David's reign was more important to him than his personal enrichment.

i. "For his own enrichment this man cared nothing at all. It was everything to him that his king should come into the possession of his kingdom in peace... It is to

be feared that too often we are more concerned about our rights than about His. It is a great and glorious thing when our loyalty and love make us far more concerned about the victories of our Lord, than about our own unquestioned rights. Yet that should be the normal attitude of all who sit at the King's Table." (Morgan)

*3. (31-39) David shows appreciation to Barzillai.*

**And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went across the Jordan with the king, to escort him across the Jordan. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. And he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he *was* a very rich man. And the king said to Barzillai, "Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem." But Barzillai said to the king, "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I *am* today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king? Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king. And why should the king repay me *with* such a reward? Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you." And the king answered, "Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you." Then all the people went over the Jordan. And when the king had crossed**

**over, the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own place.**

**a. Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem:** Barzillai brought essential help to David when he fled Jerusalem as Absalom took over the city. In gratitude, David offered him the honor of living with the king in Jerusalem.

**i. He was a very rich man:** Barzillai was a man of great resources - and he wisely used those resources to support the servant of God and the cause of God. In Luk 12:21, Jesus spoke of the foolish man *who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*. Barzillai was wise enough to use his resources to lay up treasure in heaven and he was rich toward God.

**b. Why should the king repay me with such a reward:** Barzillai did not do this for the sake of reward. He gave out of a right heart, not from the motive of self-exaltation.

**c. Here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king:** Barzillai respectfully declined the honor for himself but accepted it on behalf of his son Chimham.

**i.** "It is generally understood that this was Barzillai's son; and this is probable from 1Ki 2:7, where, when David was dying, he said, *Show kindness to the sons of Barzillai.*" (Clarke)

*4. (40-43) Israel and Judah quarrel about David.*

**Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. And all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel. Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, "Why have our brethren, the men of Judah,**

stolen you away and brought the king, his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan?" So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king *is* a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king's *expense*? Or has he given us any gift?" And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, "We have ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more *right* to David than you. Why then do you despise us—were we not the first to advise bringing back our king?" Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

a. **All the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel:** The northern tribes felt excluded in this ceremonial welcoming back of David from across the Jordan River.

b. **Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away... why then are you angry... why then do you despise us:** This argument was ultimately about who was more loyal to King David, and who had the greater right to honor him.

c. **Why then do you despise us:** The ten northern tribes felt unappreciated by the tribe of Judah. This competitive attitude between Judah and the ten northern tribes set the stage for civil war in David's day and the eventual division of the nation into two.

## **The Rebellion of Sheba**

**2Sa 20:1** There happened to be in Gilgal a worthless character named Sheba son of Bikri, of the tribe of Benjamin. He blew the trumpet and called out, "Down with David! We won't follow him! Men of Israel, let's go home!"



2Sa 20:2 So the Israelites deserted David and went with Sheba, but the men of Judah remained loyal and followed David from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

2Sa 20:3 When David arrived at his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace, and put them under guard. He provided for their needs, but did not have intercourse with them. They were kept confined for the rest of their lives, living like widows.

2Sa 20:4 The king said to Amasa, "Call the men of Judah together and be back here with them by the day after tomorrow."

2Sa 20:5 Amasa went to call them, but he did not get back by the time the king had told him to.

2Sa 20:6 So the king said to Abishai, "Sheba will give us more trouble than Absalom. Take my men and go after him, or else he may occupy some fortified towns and escape from us."

2Sa 20:7 So Joab's men, the royal bodyguards, and all the other soldiers left Jerusalem with Abishai to go after Sheba.

2Sa 20:8 When they reached the large rock at Gibeon, Amasa met them. Joab was dressed for battle, with a sword in its sheath fastened to his belt. As he came forward, the sword fell out.

2Sa 20:9 Joab said to Amasa, "How are you, my friend?" and took hold of his beard with his right hand in order to kiss him.

2Sa 20:10 Amasa was not on guard against the sword that Joab was holding in his other hand, and Joab stabbed him in the belly, and his insides spilled out on the ground. He died immediately, and Joab did not have to strike again. Then Joab and his brother Abishai went on after Sheba.

2Sa 20:11 One of Joab's men stood by Amasa's body and called out, "Everyone who is for Joab and David follow Joab!"

2Sa 20:12 Amasa's body, covered with blood, was lying in the middle of the road. Joab's man saw that everybody was stopping, so he dragged the body from the road out into the field and threw a blanket over it.

2Sa 20:13 After the body had been removed from the road, everyone followed Joab in pursuit of Sheba.

2Sa 20:14 Sheba passed through the territory of all the tribes of Israel and came to the city of Abel Beth Maacah, and all the members of the clan of Bikri assembled and followed him into the city.

2Sa 20:15 Joab's men heard that Sheba was there, and so they went and besieged the city. They built ramps of earth against the outer wall and also began to dig under the wall to make it fall down.

2Sa 20:16 There was a wise woman in the city who shouted from the wall, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here; I want to speak with him."

2Sa 20:17 Joab went, and she asked, "Are you Joab?" "Yes, I am," he answered. "Listen to me, sir," she said. "I'm listening," he answered.

2Sa 20:18 She said, "Long ago they used to say, 'Go and get your answer in the city of Abel'—and that's just what they did.

2Sa 20:19 Ours is a great city, one of the most peaceful and loyal in Israel. Why are you trying to destroy it? Do you want to ruin what belongs to the LORD?"

2Sa 20:20 "Never!" Joab answered. "I will never ruin or destroy your city!

2Sa 20:21 That is not our plan. A man named Sheba son of Bikri, who is from the hill country of Ephraim, started a rebellion against King David. Hand over this one man, and I will withdraw from the city." "We will throw his head over the wall to you," she said.

2Sa 20:22 Then she went to the people of the city with her plan, and they cut off Sheba's head and threw it over the wall to Joab. He blew the trumpet as a signal for his men to leave the city, and they went back home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.

2Sa 20:23 Joab was in command of the army of Israel; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in charge of David's bodyguards;

2Sa 20:24 Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was in charge of the records;

2Sa 20:25 Sheva was the court secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were the priests,

2Sa 20:26 and Ira from the town of Jair was also one of David's priests.

## **2 Samuel 20:1-26**

### **2 Samuel 20 - The Rebellion of Sheba**

#### **A. David returns to Jerusalem and to an insurrection.**

##### *1. (1-2) Sheba's rebellion.*

**And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said:**

**"We have no share in David  
Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse;  
Every man to his tents, O Israel!"**

**So every man of Israel deserted David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king.**

a. **There happened to be a rebel:** Sheba took advantage of David's weakened position after Absalom's failed rebellion and the conflict between Judah and the

other ten tribes (2Sa 19:40-43). He based his rebellion on three principles common to rebels:

- **We have no share in David:** Sheba *denied the king's sovereignty*. He claimed that David had no right to reign over him or the ten tribes of Israel.
- **The son of Jesse:** Sheba *devalued the king's identity*. Jesse was a humble farmer and Sheba wanted to emphasize David's humble beginning.
- **Every man to his tents:** Sheba *decided to go his own way* and drew others with him. He acted on his low opinion of David.

i. G. Campbell Morgan thought the phrase "**We have no share in David, nor do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse**" was an effective slogan promoted by Sheba. "The story should teach us that popular and plausible catchwords ought to be received and acted upon with great caution."

b. **Israel deserted David:** Sheba succeeded in drawing away the ten northern tribes and David had another civil war to deal with.

i. In 2Sa 19:40-43 leaders from these same ten tribes argued with the tribe of Judah over who honored David more. Their response to Sheba's rebellion shows that their desire to honor David had nothing to do with honoring him, but in exalting self.

ii. We might say that the tribe of Judah treated the other ten tribes unfairly, but "Injustice is never corrected by a yet deeper wrong." (Morgan)

iii. We might say that it is in the nature of men to divide. We have to be held together by the Holy Spirit. Paul put it like this: *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and*

*gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:1-3). We don't make the unity of the Spirit, we keep the unity of the Spirit - but we must keep what He makes.*

**c. The men of Judah... remained loyal to their king:**

The desertion of the ten tribes was distressing but the loyalty of **the men of Judah** was wonderful. When others desert or divide it gives a greater opportunity to demonstrate loyalty.

i. We should imitate the loyalty Judah showed to their king. This means we must be loyal to Jesus in spite of the mocking of the multitude. We must be loyal to Jesus in spite of the rebellion of the flesh. We must be loyal to Jesus in spite of the times when He seems distant.

*2. (3) David puts away the women Absalom violated.*

**Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.**

a. **Put them in seclusion:** Absalom raped these ten concubines as part of his rebellion against David (2Sa 16:20-23). Upon his return, David set them aside as unfortunate victims of Absalom's sin.

i. "He could not well divorce them; he could not punish them, as they were not in the transgression; he could not more be familiar with them, because they had been defiled by his son; and to have married them to other men might have been dangerous to the state." (Clarke)

b. **They were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood:** The sad fate of David's ten concubines is an example of how our sin often has horrible effects on others. They suffered because of Absalom's sin - and David's sin.

3. (4-5) *David tells Amasa to marshal an army to deal with Sheba's rebellion.*

**And the king said to Amasa, "Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself." So Amasa went to assemble *the men of Judah*. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him.**

a. **The king said to Amasa:** Amasa was Absalom's former general and David made him the commander of his army as a conciliatory move after the death of Absalom.

b. **Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days:** David knew that time was of the essence. When Absalom had the chance to quickly crush David, he did not take advantage of the opportunity. David did not want to make the same mistake with Sheba.

c. **He delayed longer than the set time:** Amasa wasn't up to the job David gave him. He was not a completely competent military man, and Joab (the former commander of David's army) defeated Amasa soundly when they fought together.

4. (6-7) *Tired of waiting, David sends his royal guard.*

**And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he find for himself fortified cities, and escape us." So Joab's men, with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the**

**mighty men, went out after him. And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.**

a. **David said to Abishai:** David gave these orders to Abishai. He was the commander over **your lord's servants** - David's personal guard.

b. **So Joab's men... and all the mighty men, went out:** Joab was the field commander of these troops, but Abishai was in command over him.

## **B. Joab kills Amasa and defeats Sheba.**

*1. (8-10) Using deception, Joab murders Amasa.*

**When they were at the large stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa came before them. Now Joab was dressed in battle armor; on it was a belt *with* a sword fastened in its sheath at his hips; and as he was going forward, it fell out. Then Joab said to Amasa, "Are you in health, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not notice the sword that *was* in Joab's hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and he did not *strike* him again. Thus he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.**

a. **Amasa came before them:** Amasa didn't assemble the army of Judah quickly enough, but he didn't want to be left out of the battle. He joined the troops loyal to David at **Gibeon**.

b. **Joab took Amasa by the beard:** Joab approached Amasa with cunning and deception. Holding the beard was a sign of a friendly welcome, and the fallen sword made it seem that Joab was unarmed.

c. **He struck him with it in the stomach:** Joab showed how ruthless he was. He murdered Amasa - the man who replaced him as commander of David's armies - out

of both rivalry and concern that Amasa did not genuinely support David.

- i. "It is very likely that Amasa did not immediately die: I have known instances of persons living several hours after their bowels had been shed out." (Clarke)

*2. (11-14) Joab takes command of the troops loyal to David.*

**Meanwhile one of Joab's men stood near Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab and whoever *is* for David—follow Joab!" But Amasa wallowed in *his* blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted. When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. And he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel and Beth Maachah and all the Berites. So they were gathered together and also went after *Sheba*.**

a. **All the people went on after Joab:** For all his ruthless devotion to David, Joab was a true leader. The soldiers naturally followed the commander who successfully led them many times before.

b. **He went through all the tribes of Israel:** Joab was able to find men loyal to David in all the tribes of Israel. Though Sheba was able to assemble an army against David, there were still many people loyal to David.

*3. (15-122) The end of Sheba's rebellion.*

**Then they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart. And all the people who were with Joab battered the wall to throw it down. Then a wise woman cried out from the city,**



**"Hear, Hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.'" When he had come near to her, the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening." So she spoke, saying, "They used to talk in former times, saying, 'They shall surely seek *guidance* at Abel,' and so they would end *disputes*. I *am among the peaceable and faithful* in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?" And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy! That *is* not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." So the woman said to Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw *it* out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.**

a. **A wise woman cried out from the city:** When Sheba took refuge in the city of Abel, Joab set a siege against the city. Siege warfare was a terrible ordeal for the citizens of the besieged city, and this **wise woman** was smart enough to seek a speedy end to the struggle.

b. **Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city:** Joab was a practical man. He had nothing against the city of Abel, only against Sheba. If the people of Abel helped him get Sheba it was all the better.

c. **They cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab:** Sheba probably thought he

was safe within the walls of that city, but no one is safe when they run against God's will. There isn't a wall high enough or strong enough to protect against God and His will.

i. We can make a spiritual analogy out of Sheba, his rebellion, and his refuge in the city of Abel. "Every man's breast is a city enclosed. Every sin is a traitor that lurketh within those walls. God calleth for Sheba's head, neither hath he any quarrel to us for our person, but for our sin. If we love the head of our traitor above the life of our soul, we shall justly perish in the vengeance." (Trapp)

ii. "It were happy if all such traitors might hop headless." (Trapp)

iii. So ended the rebellion of Sheba. Yet the division between Judah and the other eleven tribes of Israel remained. After the death of Solomon there was a civil war that permanently divided the twelve tribes into two nations: the southern Kingdom of Judah and the northern Kingdom of Israel.

#### *4. (23-26) David's second administration.*

**And Joab was over all the army of Israel; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; Adoram was in charge of revenue; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; Sheva was scribe; Zadok and Abiathar were the priests; and Ira the Jairite was a chief minister under David.**

a. **Joab was over all the army of Israel:** Though he gained the position through murder, David allowed Joab to take control over the armies of Israel.

b. **Benaiah... Adoram... Jehoshaphat... Sheva... Zadok and Abiathar... Ira the Jairite:** The greatness of David's kingdom was not built on David's abilities

alone. He knew how to assemble and lead an effective team.

i. Some think that the idea behind the phrase “**chief minister**” is that Ira was sort of a chaplain to David. “He was probably a sort of *domestic chaplain* to the king.” (Clarke)

ii. If David - a man after God’s heart and the sweet psalmist of Israel - needed devotional “help,” we should not think ourselves above it.

### **David Avenges the Gibeonites**

**2Sa 21:1** During David's reign there was a severe famine which lasted for three full years. So David consulted the LORD about it, and the LORD said, "Saul and his family are guilty of murder; he put the people of Gibeon to death."

2Sa 21:2 (The people of Gibeon were not Israelites; they were a small group of Amorites whom the Israelites had promised to protect, but Saul had tried to destroy them because of his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.)

2Sa 21:3 So David summoned the people of Gibeon and said to them, "What can I do for you? I want to make up for the wrong that was done to you, so that you will bless the LORD's people."

2Sa 21:4 They answered, "Our quarrel with Saul and his family can't be settled with silver or gold, nor do we want to kill any Israelite." "What, then, do you think I should do for you?" David asked.

2Sa 21:5 They answered, "Saul wanted to destroy us and leave none of us alive anywhere in Israel.

2Sa 21:6 So hand over seven of his male descendants, and we will hang them before the LORD at Gibeah, the hometown of Saul, the LORD's chosen king." "I will hand them over," the king answered.

2Sa 21:7 But because of the sacred promise that he and Jonathan had made to each other, David spared Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul.

2Sa 21:8 However, he took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons that Rizpah the daughter of Aiah had borne to Saul; he also took the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, whom she had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai, who was from Meholah.

2Sa 21:9 David handed them over to the people of Gibeon, who hanged them on the mountain before the LORD—and all seven of them died together. It was late in the spring, at the beginning of the barley harvest, when they were put to death.

2Sa 21:10 Then Saul's concubine Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, used sackcloth to make a shelter for herself on the rock where the corpses were, and she stayed there from the beginning of harvest until the autumn rains came. During the day she would keep the birds away from the corpses, and at night she would protect them from wild animals.

2Sa 21:11 When David heard what Rizpah had done,

2Sa 21:12 he went and got the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan from the people of Jabesh in Gilead. (They had stolen them from the public square in Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hanged the bodies on the day they killed Saul on Mount Gilboa.)

2Sa 21:13 David took the bones of Saul and Jonathan and also gathered up the bones of the seven men who had been hanged.

2Sa 21:14 Then they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan in the grave of Saul's father Kish, in Zela in the territory of Benjamin, doing all that the king had commanded. And after that, God answered their prayers for the country.

## **War with the Philistines**

2Sa 21:15 There was another war between the Philistines and Israel, and David and his men went and fought the Philistines. During one of the battles David grew tired.

2Sa 21:16 A giant named Ishbibenob, who was carrying a bronze spear that weighed about seven and a half pounds and who was wearing a new sword, thought he could kill David.

2Sa 21:17 But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to David's help, attacked the giant, and killed him. Then David's men made David promise that he would never again go out with them to battle. "You are the hope of Israel, and we don't want to lose you," they said.

2Sa 21:18 After this there was a battle with the Philistines at Gob, during which Sibbecai from Hushah killed a giant named Saph.

2Sa 21:19 There was another battle with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jair from Bethlehem killed Goliath from Gath, whose spear had a shaft as thick as the bar on a weaver's loom.

2Sa 21:20 Then there was another battle at Gath, where there was a giant who loved to fight. He had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

2Sa 21:21 He defied the Israelites, and Jonathan, the son of David's brother Shammah, killed him.

2Sa 21:22 These four were descendants of the giants of Gath, and they were killed by David and his men.

## **2 Samuel 21:1-22**

### **2 Samuel 21 - Avenging the Gibeonites**

#### **A. David avenges the Gibeonites.**

*1. (1) A three-year famine prompts David to seek God.*

**Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the**

**LORD. And the LORD answered, “*It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.*”**

a. **And David inquired of the LORD:** David wisely sought God in the face of chronic problems. David was concerned after the first year of famine, and even more after the second - but two years of famine didn't make him look to a spiritual cause. Yet after three years of famine, **David inquired of the LORD.**

i. David didn't see a spiritual reason in *every* problem, but he did not shut his eyes to the hand of God in circumstances.

ii. “The first and second year he might look upon it as a punishment laid upon them for the common sins of the land: but when he saw it continuing a third year also, he thought there was something in it more than ordinary, and therefore, although he well knew the natural cause to be drought, yet he inquired after the supernatural, as wise men should do.” (Trapp)

b. **It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites:** This massacre isn't recorded in 1 Samuel, but David didn't question that it happened. Apparently at some time during his reign Saul attacked and killed many of the Gibeonites.

i. “The whole people suffered for Saul's sin; either because they approved it, or at least bewailed it not; neither did what they could to hinder it; whereby they became accessory.” (Trapp)

c. **He killed the Gibeonites:** When David heard it was because of an attack against the **Gibeonites**, a chill probably ran up his back. He knew they were a people *especially* wrong for Saul to attack and kill.

i. In the days of Joshua - more than 400 years before David's time - Israel swore not to harm the Gibeonites, a neighboring tribe (Joshua 9). God expected Israel to keep its promise, even though the Gibeonites tricked Israel into making the agreement. Saul's crime was not only in killing the Gibeonites but also in breaking this ancient and important oath.

ii. This emphasizes many important principles:

- God expects us to keep our promises.
- God expects nations to keep their promises.
- Time does not diminish our obligation to promises.
- God's correction may come a long time after the offense.

iii. If God has such a high expectation that men keep their covenants, we can have great confidence that He will keep His covenant with us. There is an emerald rainbow around the throne of God to proclaim His remembrance to His everlasting covenant with His people (Rev 4:3).

## *2. (2) David speaks to the Gibeonites.*

**So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah.**

a. **The king called the Gibeonites:** David knew he had to do something about this and so he initiated a resolution with the Gibeonites.

b. **Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah:** We normally think of

such zeal as something good. Yet Saul's *misguided* zeal was a sin and brought calamity on Israel.

i. This is a good example of how *good intentions* don't excuse *bad actions*. We often excuse bad actions in ourselves and in others because of what we think are good intentions. But God examines both our *intentions* and our *actions*.

### 3. (3-6) *David's agreement with the Gibeonites.*

**Therefore David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?" And the Gibeonites said to him, "We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us." So he said, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." Then they answered the king, "As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel, let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD chose." And the king said, "I will give *them*."**

a. **What shall I do for you:** In resolving this matter with the Gibeonites, David did not dictate terms to them. He came to them as a servant, not as a king.

b. **That you may bless the inheritance of the LORD:** David felt that if the Gibeonites could **bless** Israel then the reconciliation would be complete, and God's chastening of Israel would end.

c. **We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us:** The Gibeonites made it clear that they didn't want money or direct retribution. Though Saul made a



wholesale slaughter of the Gibeonites, they didn't ask for the same among the people of Israel.

**d. Let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us:** In those ancient times the request of the Gibeonites was considered reasonable. Instead of money or an "eye for an eye" they only asked for justice against Saul through his descendants. David agreed to this (**I will give them**).

i. "Which God had now a purpose to root out, that they might not be further troublesome to David - who had lately suffered so much - in the quiet enjoyment of the kingdom." (Trapp)

**e. I will give them:** David knew this was the right thing to do. Some believe he knew it was right because David knew that Saul's descendants helped in or benefited directly from that massacre.

i. Obviously, we are not told *everything* about this incident; we must trust the principle stated by Abraham: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* (Gen 18:25)

*4. (7-9) David fulfills the agreement with the Gibeonites.*

**But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD. So they fell, *all* seven together, and were put to death in**

**the days of harvest, in the first *days*, in the beginning of barley harvest.**

a. **The king spared Mephibosheth:** Mephibosheth was the most notable living descendant of Saul and it made the most sense to put him as the first of the seven to be delivered to the Gibeonites for execution. Yet David promised to protect and bless Mephibosheth and he would not fulfill one promise at the expense of another.

b. **They hanged them on the hill before the LORD:** David chose seven male descendants of Saul to give over to the Gibeonites and they executed them by public hanging. The phrase **before the LORD** implies God approved of their execution.

i. The *method* of death was also important because it fulfilled the promise of Deu 21:23 : *he who is hanged is accursed of God*. These descendants of Saul bore the curse Saul deserved and so delivered Israel from the guilt of their sin against the Gibeonites.

ii. This promise from Deu 21:23 explains why Jesus died the way He did. Gal 3:13 explains: *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")*.

5. (10-14a) Rizpah's vigil.

**Now Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until the late rains poured on them from heaven. And she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night. And David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. Then David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh Gilead who**

**had stolen them from the street of Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, after the Philistines had struck down Saul in Gilboa. So he brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there; and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged. They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the tomb of Kish his father.**

**a. Spread it for herself on the rock... until the late rains poured on them from heaven:** Rizpah - the mother of two of the seven delivered for execution - held a vigil over the bodies until the **late rains** came. The coming of rain showed that the famine was over, that justice was satisfied, and that Israel was delivered.

i. This means that the bodies of these men were deliberately left unburied. This was to emphasize the fact that these men were executed as an act of judgment.

**b. They gathered the bones:** David gave these seven a public burial, together with the remains of Saul and Jonathan.

*6. (14b) The famine ends.*

**So they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God heeded the prayer for the land.**

**a. They performed all that the king commanded:** David directed all of this and he did it partly on the principle stated in Num 35:33 : *So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.* The idea is that blood from unpunished murders defiles a land and God will one day require that blood from the nation.

b. **After that God heeded the prayer for the land:** It wasn't as if from the time Saul massacred the Gibeonites until David's day that God did not answer any of Israel's prayers. Yet there came a time when God wanted to deal with this sin, and at that time He would not answer their prayers until they dealt with it.

i. There are many reasons for unanswered prayer. When we see that our prayers are not answered we should seek God to address the problem.

## **B. Defeat of the Philistine giants.**

1. *(15-17) David retires from active duty.*

**When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint. Then Ishbi-Benob, who was one of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose bronze spear was three hundred *shekels*, who was bearing a new *sword*, thought he could kill David. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel."**

a. **And David grew faint:** Even a great man of God grows old. As the years went on, David became unable to fight as he once did. In this battle against the Philistines David's life was endangered when he **grew faint** in battle against a descendant of Goliath.

i. Israel faced the challenge of what they would do when they saw weakness in their leader. Since it was a weakness that could be understood - David's increasing frailty in old age - they should rally around their leader and supply what he cannot.

b. **Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid:** When David's strength failed, God protected him through the strength of others. God will allow us to be in places where we need the strength of others.

i. *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up... Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. (Ecc 4:9-12)*

c. **You shall go out no more with us to battle:** In his advanced age, it was time for David to retire from the field of battle. His season as a warrior had passed.

i. "David is considered as the *lamp* by which all Israel was guided, and without whom all the nation must be involved in darkness." (Clarke)

ii. "The body drowneth not whilst the head is above water; when that once sinketh, death is near: so here. Pray therefore for the preservation of good princes; we cannot pray for them, and not pray for ourselves." (Trapp)

## 2. (18-22) *Killing three more Philistine giants.*

**Now it happened afterward that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the sons of the giant. Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed *the brother of Goliath* the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of *great* stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also was born to the giant. So when**

**he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him. These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.**

a. **Now it happened afterward:** This description of victory over Philistine giants showed that Israel could slay giants without David.

i. **Sibbechai... Elhanan... Jonathan:** These men accomplished heroic deeds when David was finished fighting giants. God will continue to raise up leaders when the leaders of the previous generation pass from the scene.

ii. David's legacy lay not only in what he accomplished, but also in what he left behind - a people prepared for victory. David's triumphs were meaningful not only for himself but for others who learned victory through his teaching and example.

b. **Who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot:** Commentators like Adam Clarke can't resist reminding us that this is a known phenomenon. "This is not a solitary instance: *Tavernier* informs us that the eldest son of the emperor of Java, who reigned in 1649, had *six fingers* on each hand, and *six toes* on each foot... I once saw a young girl, in the county of Londonderry, in Ireland, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, but her stature had nothing gigantic in it."

c. **Fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants:** Part of the idea is that David conquers enemies in the present, so it will be better for Solomon in the future. Our present victory is not only good for us now, but it also passes something important on to the next generation.

i. The defeat of these four giants is rightly credited to **the hand of David and the hand of his servants**. David had a role in this through his example, his guidance, and his influence.

ii. "Let those who after long service find themselves waning in strength, be content to abide with the people of God, still shining for them as a lamp, and thus enabling them to carry on the same Divine enterprises. Such action in the last days of life is also great and high service." (Morgan)

### **David's Song of Deliverance**

**2Sa 22:1** When the LORD saved David from Saul and his other enemies, David sang this song to the LORD:

2Sa 22:2 The LORD is my protector; he is my strong fortress.

2Sa 22:3 My God is my protection, and with him I am safe. He protects me like a shield; he defends me and keeps me safe. He is my savior; he protects me and saves me from violence.

2Sa 22:4 I call to the LORD, and he saves me from my enemies. Praise the LORD!

2Sa 22:5 The waves of death were all around me; the waves of destruction rolled over me.

2Sa 22:6 The danger of death was around me, and the grave set its trap for me.

2Sa 22:7 In my trouble I called to the LORD; I called to my God for help. In his temple he heard my voice; he listened to my cry for help.

2Sa 22:8 Then the earth trembled and shook; the foundations of the sky rocked and quivered because God was angry!

2Sa 22:9 Smoke poured out of his nostrils, a consuming flame and burning coals from his mouth.

2Sa 22:10 He tore the sky open and came down, with a dark cloud under his feet.

2Sa 22:11 He flew swiftly on his winged creature; he traveled on the wings of the wind.

2Sa 22:12 He covered himself with darkness; thick clouds, full of water, surrounded him;

2Sa 22:13 burning coals flamed up from the lightning before him.

2Sa 22:14 Then the LORD thundered from the sky, and the voice of Almighty God was heard.

2Sa 22:15 He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies; with flashes of lightning he sent them running.

2Sa 22:16 The floor of the ocean was laid bare, and the foundations of the earth were uncovered when the LORD rebuked his enemies and roared at them in anger.

2Sa 22:17 The LORD reached down from above and took hold of me; he pulled me out of the deep waters.

2Sa 22:18 He rescued me from my powerful enemies and from all those who hate me—they were too strong for me.

2Sa 22:19 When I was in trouble, they attacked me, but the LORD protected me.

2Sa 22:20 He helped me out of danger; he saved me because he was pleased with me.

2Sa 22:21 The LORD rewards me because I do what is right; he blesses me because I am innocent.

2Sa 22:22 I have obeyed the law of the LORD; I have not turned away from my God.

2Sa 22:23 I have observed all his laws; I have not disobeyed his commands.

2Sa 22:24 He knows that I am faultless, that I have kept myself from doing wrong.

2Sa 22:25 And so he rewards me because I do what is right, because he knows that I am innocent.



2Sa 22:26 O LORD, you are faithful to those who are faithful to you, and completely good to those who are perfect.

2Sa 22:27 You are pure to those who are pure, but hostile to those who are wicked.

2Sa 22:28 You save those who are humble, but you humble those who are proud.

2Sa 22:29 You, LORD, are my light; you dispel my darkness.

2Sa 22:30 You give me strength to attack my enemies and power to overcome their defenses.

2Sa 22:31 This God—how perfect are his deeds, how dependable his words! He is like a shield for all who seek his protection.

2Sa 22:32 The LORD alone is God; God alone is our defense.

2Sa 22:33 This God is my strong refuge; he makes my pathway safe.

2Sa 22:34 He makes me sure-footed as a deer; he keeps me safe on the mountains.

2Sa 22:35 He trains me for battle, so that I can use the strongest bow.

2Sa 22:36 O LORD, you protect me and save me; your help has made me great.

2Sa 22:37 You have kept me from being captured, and I have never fallen.

2Sa 22:38 I pursue my enemies and defeat them; I do not stop until I destroy them.

2Sa 22:39 I strike them down, and they cannot rise; they lie defeated before me.

2Sa 22:40 You give me strength for the battle and victory over my enemies.

2Sa 22:41 You make my enemies run from me; I destroy those who hate me.

2Sa 22:42 They look for help, but no one saves them; they call to the LORD, but he does not answer.

2Sa 22:43 I crush them, and they become like dust; I trample on them like mud in the streets.

2Sa 22:44 You saved me from my rebellious people and maintained my rule over the nations; people I did not know have now become my subjects.

2Sa 22:45 Foreigners bow before me; when they hear me, they obey.

2Sa 22:46 They lose their courage and come trembling from their fortresses.

2Sa 22:47 The LORD lives! Praise my defender! Proclaim the greatness of the strong God who saves me!

2Sa 22:48 He gives me victory over my enemies; he subdues the nations under me

2Sa 22:49 and saves me from my foes. O LORD, you give me victory over my enemies and protect me from violent men.

2Sa 22:50 And so I praise you among the nations; I sing praises to you.

2Sa 22:51 God gives great victories to his king; he shows constant love to the one he has chosen, to David and his descendants forever.

## **2 Samuel 22:1-51**

### **2 Samuel 22 - David's Psalm of Praise**

#### **A. Part One: Praise, Deliverance, and the Reason for Deliverance.**

*1. (1) Introduction to the psalm.*

**Then David spoke to the LORD the words of this song, on the day when the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.**

**a. Then David spoke to the LORD the words of this song:** For many reasons, most commentators assume that this was a psalm David wrote and sung many years before and is inserted at the end of 2 Samuel out of its chronological place. This is possible, but not necessary.

i. "The psalm appears almost as David's final words. Hence, it is a summary thanksgiving for God's many deliverances of him through his long life of service." (Boice)

**b. The words of this song:** With minor variations, this psalm is the same as Psalms 18. It is likely that David composed this song as a younger man - perhaps when Saul died, and he first took the throne, as described in 2Sa 8:14, when David had subdued all his enemies, *and the LORD preserved David wherever he went*. Yet in his old age David could look back with great gratitude and sing this song *again*, looking at his whole life.

i. This psalm is a great summary of David's whole character and attitude through life. "Such convictions - of the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah, of His omnipotent power to deliver, of the necessity for obedience to His law, and of assurance that in the case of such obedience He ever acts for His people - constituted the underlying strength of David's character." (Morgan)

ii. "We have another form of this Psalm with significant variations. . . and this suggests the idea that it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own remarkable history, and observed the gracious hand of God in it all." (Spurgeon)

2. (2-4) *David praises the God of his deliverance.*

**And he said:**

**"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;**

**The God of my strength, in whom I will trust;**

**My shield and the horn of my salvation,**

**My stronghold and my refuge;**

**My Savior, You save me from violence.**

**I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised;**

**So shall I be saved from my enemies.**

a. **My rock and my fortress and my deliverer:** David piled title upon title in praising God. God's work for David was so big and comprehensive that it couldn't be contained in one title.

i. "In the opening sentence, which we have emphasized, the sense of truth is reinforced by the final words, '*even mine.*' By them the singer revealed the fact that all he celebrated in song was more than theory, it was experience." (Morgan)

ii. David *experienced* the LORD's deliverance:

- God delivered David from Goliath.
- God delivered David from Saul.
- God delivered David from backsliding.
- God delivered David from Israel's enemies.
- God delivered David from Absalom.
- God delivered David from David's own sinful passions.

b. **In whom I will trust:** When we see God for who He is, it is easy to **trust** Him. When we know He is our **rock**

and **fortress** and **deliverer** and **shield** and **stronghold** and **Savior**, it is natural to then **trust** Him completely.

i. Faith does not completely depend on knowledge, but the right knowledge of God gives great strength to faith.

c. **My Savior, You save me:** Each title was meaningful to David because God fulfilled the meaning of each title in David's experience. This isn't a list of the names of God one might find in a systematic theology; this is the knowledge of God combined with the right experience of God.

d. **I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised:** "It is well to pray to God as to one who deserves to be praised, for then we plead in a happy and confident manner. If I feel that I can and do bless the Lord for all his past goodness, I am bold to ask great things of him." (Spurgeon)

3. (5-20) *David's deliverance comes from God.*

**"When the waves of death surrounded me,  
The floods of ungodliness made me afraid.**

**The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;  
The snares of death confronted me.**

**In my distress I called upon the LORD,  
And cried out to my God;**

**He heard my voice from His temple,  
And my cry *entered* His ears.**

**"Then the earth shook and trembled;  
The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken,  
Because He was angry.**

**Smoke went up from His nostrils,  
And devouring fire from His mouth;  
Coals were kindled by it.**

**He bowed the heavens also, and came down  
With darkness under His feet.**

He rode upon a cherub, and flew;  
And He was seen upon the wings of the wind.  
He made darkness canopies around Him,  
Dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.  
From the brightness before Him  
Coals of fire were kindled.  
"The LORD thundered from heaven,  
And the Most High uttered His voice.  
He sent out arrows and scattered them;  
Lightning bolts, and He vanquished them.  
Then the channels of the sea were seen,  
The foundations of the world were uncovered,  
At the rebuke of the LORD,  
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.  
"He sent from above, He took me,  
He drew me out of many waters.  
He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
From those who hated me;  
For they were too strong for me.  
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,  
But the LORD was my support.  
He also brought me out into a broad place;  
He delivered me because He delighted in me.

a. **Waves... floods... sorrows... snares:** Danger surrounded David on every side - physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially - David was on the brink of ruin when he cried out to God.

b. **In my distress I called upon the LORD:** The enemy of our soul wants us to believe that we can't call upon the LORD in our **distress** - as if we had to be right with God and sitting peacefully in a prayer chapel to pray rightly. David knew that God hears our **distress** signals.

c. **He heard my voice:** For David it was that simple. He cried out to God, and God **heard**. David also knew that

God could not *hear* the distress of His people without taking action on their behalf.

d. **Then the earth shook:** God was so concerned about David's problem that it seemed to David as if He shook the earth to meet his need.

i. "What is most impressive... is the magnificent way the psalmist describes God rising from his throne in heaven in response to his servant's cry, parting the clouds, and descending to fight the king's battles accompanied by earthquakes, thunder, storms, and lightning." (Boice)

e. **He rode upon a cherub, and flew:** David pictured the LORD coming to meet his need, coming with glory and speed. He came so fast to David that it seemed that God traveled **upon the wings of the wind**.

i. "In the *original* of this sublime passage, *sense* and *sound* are astonishingly well connected... The *clap* of the *wing*, the *agitation* and *rush* through the air are expressed here in a very extraordinary manner." (Clarke)

f. **The Most High uttered His voice:** When God came He spoke up on David's behalf, commanding all creation to respond to His passionate desire to deliver His child.

i. All this is a reflection of David's confidence in the love of God. David sees a God so loving that he won't tolerate the distress of His beloved. When things aren't right for His beloved all creation will see His passion and urgency to meet the need of His beloved.

g. **He took me... He drew me... He delivered me:** David saw God apply all that majesty and strength to the meeting of his need.

h. **They were too strong for me... the LORD was my support:** David knew that the victory was due to God's

hand, not due to his own ingenuity or ability. Without the LORD for **support** David would fall.

i. **He delivered me because He delighted in me:** David had a sense of God's *delight* in him. His plea for deliverance was rooted in relationship, not merely in a desire to survive.

4. (21-25) *Why God delivered David.*

**"The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;**

**According to the cleanness of my hands**

**He has recompensed me.**

**For I have kept the ways of the LORD,**

**And have not wickedly departed from my God.**

**For all His judgments *were* before me;**

**And *as for* His statutes, I did not depart from them.**

**I was also blameless before Him,**

**And I kept myself from my iniquity.**

**Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,**

**According to my cleanness in His eyes.**

a. **According to the cleanness of my hands:** These words are one reason why many believe David could only sing this psalm *before* his sin with Bathsheba. Yet the text seems to indicate that David sang this towards the *end* of his days (2Sa 22:1).

i. We might say that David simply believed what the Prophet Nathan told him in 2Sa 12:13 : *The LORD also has put away your sin*. David knew he was a forgiven man, and that the **cleanness of his hands** was because God cleansed them, not because they had never been dirtied.

ii. "If we were to remind David of his sin with Bathsheba, he would claim it as an illustration and a



proof of this principle since he suffered in a variety of ways as a consequence of that great sin. But even though that happened, just as similar transgressions are committed by us all, on the whole he was nevertheless a man after God's own heart and was greatly blessed by God." (Boice)

**b. I have kept the ways of the LORD... I was also blameless before Him:** David isn't claiming sinless perfection. He spoke of his general righteousness and of his righteousness as it contrasted with the wickedness of his enemies.

i. "Before God the man after God's own heart was a humble sinner, but before his slanderers he could with unblushing face speak of the '*cleanness of his hands*' and the righteousness of his life." (Spurgeon)

ii. We can come to God in prayer with the same claim, but not on the basis of our own righteousness, but the righteousness we have *received* in Jesus (1Co 1:30 and 2Co 5:21).

**c. I kept myself from my iniquity:** Some think this is arrogance or pride on David's part. Spurgeon quotes one commentator who wrote, "Kept himself! Who made man his own keeper?" Yet we know there is certainly a sense in which we must keep ourselves from sin, even as Paul spoke of a man cleansing himself for God's glory and for greater service (2Ti 2:21).

## **B. Part Two: The Reason for Deliverance, Deliverance, and Praise.**

*1. (26-30) Why God delivered David.*

**"With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;  
With a blameless man You will show Yourself  
blameless;**

**With the pure You will show Yourself pure;  
And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.  
You will save the humble people;  
But Your eyes *are* on the haughty, *that* You may bring  
them down.**

**“For You *are* my lamp, O LORD;  
The LORD shall enlighten my darkness.  
For by You I can run against a troop;  
By my God I can leap over a wall.**

a. **With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful:** Jesus discussed this principle in the sermon on the mount but from the perspective of man instead of from God: *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.* (Mat 7:2)

i. “In these words we have revealed the principles of relationship between God and man. God is to man what man is to God.” (Morgan)

ii. David didn’t only *sing* about this principle; he also lived it and benefited from it. God showed David great mercy because he showed great mercy to others, like Saul (1Sa 24:10-13) and Shimei (2Sa 16:7-12).

iii. “Note that even the merciful need mercy; no amount of generosity to the poor, or forgiveness to enemies, can set us beyond the need of mercy.” (Spurgeon)

b. **With the devious You will show Yourself shrewd:** Translators have trouble with this sentence because it communicates a difficult concept. It’s easy to say that if a man is pure towards God then God will be pure to him. But you can’t say that if a man is wicked towards God then God will be wicked towards him, because God can’t do anything wicked.

i. "David expresses the second half of the parallel by a somewhat ambiguous word, the root meaning of which is 'twisted.' The verse actually says, 'To the twisted (or crooked) you will show yourself twisted (or crooked)'... The idea seems to be that if a person insists in going devious ways in his dealings with God, God will outwit him, as that man deserves." (Boice)

c. **You will save the humble people; but Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down:** David proclaims his confidence in the principle repeated in Pro 3:34, Jas 4:6, and 1Pe 5:5 : *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

i. There is something in true humility that prompts the grace and mercy of God and there is something in pride and haughtiness that prompts his resistance and displeasure.

ii. Humility isn't necessarily a *low* opinion of self; it is a combination of *accurate* opinion of self and simple self-forgetfulness. Humility is *others*-centered not *self*-centered.

d. **The LORD shall enlighten my darkness:** When God met David's need He first brought *light*. Great strength and skill don't help much at all if we can't see in the midst of the struggle.

e. **By You I can run against a troop; by my God I can leap over a wall:** When God met David's need He brought *strength*. One man should not be able to battle **a troop**, nor should he be able to **leap over a wall** protecting a city.

i. David knew the principle of Eph 6:10 long before Paul penned the words: *Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*. God has a resource of power (*His might*) that He makes available to us by faith. We

don't have to be strong in *our* might, but we can be strong in *His* might.

2. (31-46) *David's deliverance comes from God.*

**As for God, His way *is* perfect;  
The word of the LORD *is* proven;  
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.  
"For who *is* God, except the LORD?  
And who *is* a rock, except our God?  
God *is* my strength *and* power,  
And He makes my way perfect.  
He makes my feet like the *feet* of deer,  
And sets me on my high places.  
He teaches my hands to make war,  
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.  
"You have also given me the shield of Your salvation;  
Your gentleness has made me great.  
You enlarged my path under me;  
So my feet did not slip.  
"I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them;  
Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.  
And I have destroyed them and wounded them,  
So that they could not rise;  
They have fallen under my feet.  
For You have armed me with strength for the battle;  
You have subdued under me those who rose against me.  
You have also given me the necks of my enemies,  
So that I destroyed those who hated me.  
They looked, but *there was* none to save;  
*Even* to the LORD, but He did not answer them.  
Then I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth;  
I trod them like dirt in the streets,  
*And* I spread them out.  
"You have also delivered me from the strivings of my people;**

**You have kept me as the head of the nations.  
A people I have not known shall serve me.  
The foreigners submit to me;  
As soon as they hear, they obey me.  
The foreigners fade away,  
And come frightened from their hideouts.**

a. **He is a shield to all who trust in Him:** When God met David's need He brought *protection*. David could see with light and stand in God's strength, but he still needed supernatural protection. David's **trust** was the vital link in receiving this protection from God.

b. **He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places:** David thought of how the **deer** seem to skip from place to place and never lose their footing. God gave him the same kind of skill in working through the challenges brought by his enemies.

c. **So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze:** David thought of the strength needed to bend a bow made **of bronze**. God gave him the same kind of strength to overcome the challenges brought by his enemies.

d. **Your gentleness has made me great:** For David, it wasn't only about skill and power. It was also about receiving God's mercy and enjoying relationship with the God of great **gentleness**. This also was a resource of strength for David.

i. "We might brave the lion; we are vanquished by the Lamb. We could withstand the scathing look of scorn; but when the gentle Lord casts on us the look of ineffable tenderness, we go out to weep bitterly."  
(Meyer)

e. **I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them:** David relished the place of *victory* he had in the LORD. He wasn't hesitant to proclaim it, either out of false

humility or out of uncertainty of possessing the victory. He knew that enemies might rise again, but he looked back at the field of battle and said, **"They have fallen under my feet, and when they were under my feet I trod them like dirt in the streets."**

f. **You have also delivered me from the strivings of my people:** David didn't only have to battle with problems from enemies, but also with **the strivings** of his own **people**. In the midst of the battle he had to endure the contention of his own people, but God sustained him through that also.

g. **You have kept me as the head of the nations:** David knew that the throne belonged to God. David knew, "The throne is not mine. Not to have, not to take, not to protect, and not to keep. The throne is the LORD's." Therefore, when David *had* the throne, he knew it was *God* who gave it to him.

3. (47-51) *David praises the God of his deliverance.*

**"The LORD lives!**

**Blessed be my Rock!**

**Let God be exalted,**

**The Rock of my salvation!**

***It is* God who avenges me,**

**And subdues the peoples under me;**

**He delivers me from my enemies.**

**You also lift me up above those who rise against me;**

**You have delivered me from the violent man.**

**Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles,**

**And sing praises to Your name.**

***"He is* the tower of salvation to His king,**

**And shows mercy to His anointed,**

**To David and his descendants forevermore."**

a. **The LORD lives! Blessed be my Rock:** David thought of the great victory of God on his behalf and could only worship.

b. **It is God who avenges me, and subdues the peoples under me:** David emphasized the thought, "This is the LORD's victory. He won it for me. The glory goes to Him."

c. **He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up:** We see in this psalm that David constantly moved back and forth from speaking *about* God (**He delivers me**) to speaking directly *to* God (**You also lift me up**). David didn't seem to have a problem moving between the two aspects, indicating that there is place for both in praise.

d. **And sing praises to Your name:** "To be saved singing is to be saved indeed. Many are saved mourning and doubting; but David had such faith that he could fight singing, and with the battle with a song still on his lips." (Spurgeon)

i. Paul quotes 2Sa 22:50 (Psa 18:49) in Rom 15:9.

e. **And shows mercy to His anointed:** David ended the psalm understanding his position in **mercy**. Though earlier in the psalm he proclaimed his own righteousness, he came back to the foundation of God's **mercy**. David's relationship with God was based on God's great **mercy**, not upon David's own righteousness.

## **The Last Words of David**

**2Sa 23:1** David son of Jesse was the man whom God made great, whom the God of Jacob chose to be king, and who was the composer of beautiful songs for Israel. These are David's last words:

2Sa 23:2 The spirit of the LORD speaks through me; his message is on my lips.

2Sa 23:3 The God of Israel has spoken; the protector of Israel said to me: "The king who rules with justice, who rules in obedience to God,

2Sa 23:4 is like the sun shining on a cloudless dawn, the sun that makes the grass sparkle after rain."

2Sa 23:5 And that is how God will bless my descendants, because he has made an eternal covenant with me, an agreement that will not be broken, a promise that will not be changed. That is all I desire; that will be my victory, and God will surely bring it about.

2Sa 23:6 But godless people are like thorns that are thrown away; no one can touch them barehanded.

2Sa 23:7 You must use an iron tool or a spear; they will be burned completely.

### **David's Mighty Men**

2Sa 23:8 These are the names of David's famous soldiers: the first was Josheb Basshebeth from Tachemon, who was the leader of "The Three"; he fought with his spear against eight hundred men and killed them all in one battle.

2Sa 23:9 The second of the famous three was Eleazar son of Dodo, of the clan of Ahoh. One day he and David challenged the Philistines who had gathered for battle. The Israelites fell back,

2Sa 23:10 but he stood his ground and fought the Philistines until his hand was so cramped that he could not let go of his sword. The LORD won a great victory that day. After it was over, the Israelites returned to where Eleazar was and stripped the armor from the dead.

2Sa 23:11 The third of the famous three was Shammah son of Agee from Harar. The Philistines had gathered at Lehi, where there was a field of peas. The Israelites fled from the Philistines,



2Sa 23:12 but Shammah stood his ground in the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. The LORD won a great victory that day.

2Sa 23:13 Near the beginning of harvest time three of "The Thirty" went down to Adullam Cave, where David was, while a band of Philistines was camping in Rephaim Valley.

2Sa 23:14 At that time David was on a fortified hill, and a group of Philistines had occupied Bethlehem.

2Sa 23:15 David grew homesick and said, "How I wish someone would bring me a drink of water from the well by the gate at Bethlehem!"

2Sa 23:16 The three famous soldiers forced their way through the Philistine camp, drew some water from the well, and brought it back to David. But he would not drink it; instead he poured it out as an offering to the LORD

2Sa 23:17 and said, " LORD, I could never drink this! It would be like drinking the blood of these men who risked their lives!" So he refused to drink it. Those were the brave deeds of the three famous soldiers.

2Sa 23:18 Joab's brother Abishai (their mother was Zeruah) was the leader of "The Famous Thirty." He fought with his spear against three hundred men and killed them, and became famous among "The Thirty."

2Sa 23:19 He was the most famous of "The Thirty" and became their leader, but he was not as famous as "The Three."

2Sa 23:20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada from Kabzeel was another famous soldier; he did many brave deeds, including killing two great Moabite warriors. He once went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion.

2Sa 23:21 He also killed an Egyptian, a huge man who was armed with a spear. Benaiah attacked him with his club, snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with it.

2Sa 23:22 Those were the brave deeds of Benaiah, who was one of "The Thirty."

2Sa 23:23 He was outstanding among them, but was not as famous as "The Three." David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

2Sa 23:24 (24-39) Other members of "The Thirty" included: Asahel, Joab's brother Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem Shammah and Elikah from Harod Helez from Pelet Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa Abiezer from Anathoth Mebunnai from Hushah Zalmon from Ahoh Maharai from Netophah Heleb son of Baanah from Netophah Ittai son of Ribai from Gibeath in Benjamin Benaiah from Pirathon Hiddai from the valleys near Gaash Abialbon from Arabah Azmaveth from Bahurim Eliahba from Shaalbon The sons of Jashen Jonathan Shammah from Harar Ahiam son of Sharar from Harar Eliphelet son of Ahasbai from Maacah Eliam son of Ahithophel from Gilo Hezro from Carmel Paarai from Arab Igal son of Nathan from Zobah Bani from Gad Zelek from Ammon Naharai from Beeroth, Joab's armorbearer Ira and Gareb from Jattir Uriah the Hittite. There were thirty-seven famous soldiers in all.

## **2 Samuel 23:1-39**

### **2 Samuel 23 - David's Last Psalm**

#### **A. David's last psalm.**

*1. (1-4) The character of God's perfect king.*

**Now these *are* the last words of David.**

***Thus says David the son of Jesse;  
Thus says the man raised up on high,  
The anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And the sweet psalmist of Israel:  
"The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,  
And His word was on my tongue.***

**The God of Israel said,  
The Rock of Israel spoke to me:  
'He who rules over men *must be* just,  
Ruling in the fear of God.  
And *he shall be* like the light of the morning *when* the  
sun rises,  
A morning without clouds,  
Like the tender grass *springing* out of the earth,  
By clear shining after rain.'**

a. **These are the last words of David:** It wasn't that these were the words David spoke from his deathbed, but they expressed his heart and longing at the end of his life.

i. "I suppose the *last poetical composition* is here intended. He might have spoken many words after these in *prose*, but none in *verse*." (Clarke)

ii. This short psalm is a beautiful song of wisdom from David at the end of his life. "Wherein he doth, in few words but full of matter, acknowledge God's benefits, confess his sins, profess his faith, comfort himself in the covenant, and denounce destruction to unbelievers... How much in a little!" (Trapp)

iii. What a life his was - we have a capsule of David's life in the titles and descriptions of 2Sa 23:1 :

- **The son of Jesse:** Jesse was a humble farmer and this title reminds us of David's humble beginning.

- **The man raised up on high:** David allowed *God* to raise him up, so that he could confidently rest in this title.

- **The anointed of the God of Jacob:** David was **anointed** by God, not by himself or merely by man. He had a unique empowering and enabling from God.

- **The sweet psalmist of Israel:** David had a beautiful gift of eloquence and expression before God. This title reminds of David's deep inner life with God.

b. **The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me:** This indicates that at least at times, David was aware of the work of divine inspiration through him and expressed in his words.

c. **He who rules over men must be just:** As David looked back over his life and reign, he was struck by the great need for rulers to exercise *justice*. He knew this by seeing the goodness of justice provided and the curse of justice denied.

d. **Ruling in the fear of God:** This is the key to *justice* in the work of a leader. When leaders rule **in the fear of God** they recognize that a God of justice reviews their work and will require an accounting of how the ruler has led.

e. **He shall be like the light of the morning:** David reflected on how a wise ruler is blessed when he rules with justice. Though David's reign was not perfect it was blessed - and his reign is the most identified with the reign of the Messiah.

i. From one perspective David's reign was a disaster. He suffered from a dark scandal during his reign, he suffered under repeated family crises, under an attempted insurrection from his own son, under another civil war, and from three years of famine.

ii. In contrast to David, his son Solomon's reign seemed perfect. Solomon enjoyed a reign of peace, great prosperity, prominence, and glory.

iii. Yet the Bible has nothing but praise for David and his reign, reflected in passages like Psa 89:20, Isa 55:3-4, Rom 1:3, and Rev 22:16. In contrast,

Solomon is barely mentioned in the rest of the Scriptures and when he is, it is almost in a backhanded way (see Mat 6:28-29 and Mat 12:42).

iv. The difference between David and Solomon was found in their different relationships with God. David's passion in life was simply to be with God (Psa 84:10), while Solomon's passion was personal improvement (1Ki 3:4-15). We can also say that David endured to the end, loving and serving God in the final chapters of his life (2Sa 23:1-7), while Solomon forsook God in his later years (1Ki 11:4-8).

## 2. (5-7) *David's trust in God's covenant.*

**"Although my house *is* not so with God,  
Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant,  
Ordered in all *things* and secure.  
For *this is* all my salvation and all *my* desire;  
Will He not make *it* increase?  
But *the sons* of rebellion *shall* all *be* as thorns thrust  
away,  
Because they cannot be taken with hands.  
But the man *who* touches them  
Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear,  
And they shall be utterly burned with fire in *their*  
place."**

a. **Although my house is not so with God:** David looked at the complete blessedness of a just ruler's reign and he knew that his reign fell short of both perfect justice and complete blessedness.

b. **Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant:** David knew that the **everlasting covenant** from God was not based on David's perfection as a ruler. It was based on God's gracious commitment to His **everlasting covenant**.

c. **This is all my salvation and all my desire:** David only said this because the covenant was based on God's faithfulness and not his own. David knew that his own obedience was not enough to be a foundation for all his **salvation** and all his **desire**.

i. We can say that because of his sin and its consequences, David's light dimmed towards the end of his life, but it was not extinguished. He shined until the end. "In the Divine dealing with us, there is no mistake, no lapse. Nothing has been permitted which has not been made to serve the highest purpose. This is so even of our failures, if, like David, in true penitence we have forsaken them and confessed them. It is certainly so of all our sorrows and trials." (Morgan)

d. **The sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away:** The covenant was based on God's faithfulness, but David knew that obedience still mattered. God would still oppose **the sons of rebellion** and they would end in ruin. David knew he could trust the LORD to take care of his enemies and wicked men.

i. "This was the whole theme of David. The Lord is in control. Rest in Him. Don't fret yourself because of the evildoers that bring evil devices to pass. Rest in the Lord, trust also in Him. Delight thyself in the Lord! And all of the help, and the strength, the ministry of God's Spirit to our hearts, through the Psalms, the sweet psalmist of Israel. What a legacy he has left." (Smith)

ii. This remarkable relationship with God is the reason why David was Israel's greatest king, and the most prominent ancestor of Jesus Christ. The New Testament begins with these words: *The book of the*

*genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David*  
(Mat 1:1).

## **B. David's mighty men.**

*1. (8-12) The names and exploits of David's top three soldiers.*

**These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time. And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder. And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. Then the people fled from the Philistines. But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. And the LORD brought about a great victory.**

a. **These are the names of the mighty men:** David was nothing without his mighty men, and they were nothing without him. He was their leader, but a leader is nothing without followers - and David had **the mighty men** to follow him. These men didn't necessarily *start* as mighty men; many were some of the distressed, indebted, and discontent people who followed David at Adullam Cave (1Sa 22:1-2).

i. "These men came to David when his fortunes were at the lowest ebb, and he himself was regarded as a

rebel and an outlaw, and they remained faithful to him throughout their lives. Happy are they who can follow a good cause in its worst estate, for theirs is true glory.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The day for mighty men and women - heroic men and women for God - has not ended. “The triumph of the church as a whole depends upon the personal victory of every Christian. In other words, your victory, your life, your personal testimony, are important to the cause of God today. What happens out in New Guinea, down in the Amazon jungle, over in disturbed Congo, is not unrelated to what happens in your own personal relationship with God and your personal battle against the forces of darkness. Victory for the church on the whole world-front depends upon victory in your life and in mine; ‘home’ and ‘foreign’ situations cannot be detached.” (Redpath)

b. **Adino the Eznite:** This leader among David’s mighty men was noted for having **killed eight hundred men at one time.**

i. “THREE *hundred* is the reading in Chronicles, and seems to be the true one.” (Clarke)

c. **Eleazar the son of Dodo:** This leader of David’s mighty men was famous for hanging with David in a famous battle and when his **hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword.** Through his tenacity **the LORD brought about a great victory that day.**

i. Spurgeon saw that Eleazar, in his solitary stand until victory, was a tremendous example for believers today. “Solitary prowess is expected of believers. I hope we may breed in this place a race of men and women who know the truth, and know also what the Lord claims at their hands, and are resolved, by the



help of the Holy Spirit, to war a good warfare for their Lord whether others will stand at their side or no."

ii. "Remember Mr. Sankey's hymn, - 'Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!' Dare to be an Eleazar, and go forth and smite the Philistines alone; you will soon find that there are others in the house who have concealed their sentiments, but when they see, you coming forward, they will be openly on the Lord's side. Many cowards are skulking about, try to shame them. Many are undecided, let them see a brave man, and he will be the standard-bearer around whom they will rally." (Spurgeon)

d. **Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite:** This leader among David's mighty men **stationed himself in the middle of the field** when others fled, and he held the ground single-handedly until the **LORD brought about a great victory.**

2. (13-17) *A daring exploit from David's days at Adullam.*

**Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. And he said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is *this not* the blood of the men who went in *jeopardy of* their lives?"**

**Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men.**

a. **Came to David at the cave of Adullam:** David spent time in this cave when those who would become his mighty men first came to him in 1Sa 22:1-2. This passage describes something that happened either during that time or a later time of battle against the Philistines when David went back to **the cave of Adullam**.

b. **David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem":** During this time David had a nostalgic longing for the taste of water from a well near his boyhood home.

c. **The three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem:** In response to David's longing - which wasn't a command or even a request, just a vocalized longing - these **three mighty men** immediately went to fulfill David's desire at great personal risk.

d. **He would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD:** David was so honored by the self-sacrifice of these three mighty men he felt that the water was too good for him - and worthy to be **poured** out in sacrifice to the LORD. He believed that the great sacrifice of these men could only be honored by giving the water to the LORD.

i. "Accounting it too dear a draught for himself, he poured it out unto the Lord, out of a religious respect." (Trapp)

*3. (18-23) Two more notable men among the mighty men.*

**Now Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of *another* three. He lifted his spear against**

three hundred *men*, killed *them*, and won a name among *these* three. Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the *first* three. Benaiah *was* the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian *had* a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. These *things* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. He was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the *first* three. And David appointed him over his guard.

a. **Abishai the brother of Joab:** This leader among David's mighty men was famous for his battle against **three hundred men**. His leadership is also recorded in passages like 1Sa 26:6-9, 2Sa 3:30, and 2Sa 10:10-14.

b. **Benaiah the son of Jehoiada:** This leader among David's mighty men was famous for his battles against both men (**two lion-like heroes of Moab... an Egyptian, a spectacular man**) and beasts (**a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day**).

4. (24-39) *A list of David's mighty men.*

**Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, Heleb the son of Baanah (the Netophathite), Ittai the son of Ribai from Gibeah**

of the children of Benjamin, Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai from the brooks of Gaash, Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite (of the sons of Jashen), Jonathan, Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite (armorbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah), Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, *and* Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.

a. **Eliam the son of Ahithophel:** This man is notable among the mighty men because he was the father of Bathsheba (2Sa 11:3) and shows that Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather.

b. **Uriah the Hittite:** He is notable among the mighty men because he was the husband of Bathsheba. When David heard of Bathsheba's relation to **Uriah** and **Eliam** and **Ahithophel** (2Sa 11:3) he should have put away every idea of adultery.

c. **Thirty-seven in all:** These remarkable men were the foundation of the greatness of David's reign. They did not come to David as great men, but God used his leadership to transform them from men who were *in distress, in debt* and *discontented*, who met David back at Adullam Cave (1Sa 22:1-2).

i. "More than all his victories against outside foes, the influence of his life and character on the men nearest to him testify to his essential greatness." (Morgan)

## David's Census

**2Sa 24:1** On another occasion the LORD was angry with Israel, and he made David bring trouble on them. The LORD

said to him, "Go and count the people of Israel and Judah."

2Sa 24:2 So David gave orders to Joab, the commander of his army: "Go with your officers through all the tribes of Israel from one end of the country to the other, and count the people. I want to know how many there are."

2Sa 24:3 But Joab answered the king, "Your Majesty, may the LORD your God make the people of Israel a hundred times more numerous than they are now, and may you live to see him do it. But why does Your Majesty want to do this?"

2Sa 24:4 But the king made Joab and his officers obey his order; they left his presence and went out to count the people of Israel.

2Sa 24:5 They crossed the Jordan and camped south of Aroer, the city in the middle of the valley, in the territory of Gad. From there they went north to Jazer,

2Sa 24:6 and on to Gilead and to Kadesh, in Hittite territory. Then they went to Dan, and from Dan they went west to Sidon.

2Sa 24:7 Then they went south to the fortified city of Tyre, on to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites, and finally to Beersheba, in the southern part of Judah.

2Sa 24:8 So after nine months and twenty days they returned to Jerusalem, having traveled through the whole country.

2Sa 24:9 They reported to the king the total number of men capable of military service: 800,000 in Israel and 500,000 in Judah.

### **The Lord's Judgment of David's Sin**

2Sa 24:10 But after David had taken the census, his conscience began to hurt, and he said to the LORD, "I have committed a terrible sin in doing this! Please forgive me. I have acted foolishly."

2Sa 24:11 (11-12) The LORD said to Gad, David's prophet, "Go and tell David that I am giving him three choices. I will do whichever he chooses." The next morning, after David had gotten up,

2Sa 24:13 Gad went to him, told him what the LORD had said, and asked, "Which is it to be? Three years of famine in your land or three months of running away from your enemies or three days of an epidemic in your land? Now think it over, and tell me what answer to take back to the LORD."

2Sa 24:14 David answered, "I am in a desperate situation! But I don't want to be punished by people. Let the LORD himself be the one to punish us, for he is merciful."

2Sa 24:15 So the LORD sent an epidemic on Israel, which lasted from that morning until the time that he had chosen. From one end of the country to the other seventy thousand Israelites died.

2Sa 24:16 When the LORD's angel was about to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD changed his mind about punishing the people and said to the angel who was killing them, "Stop! That's enough!" The angel was by the threshing place of Araunah, a Jebusite.

2Sa 24:17 David saw the angel who was killing the people, and said to the LORD, "I am the guilty one. I am the one who did wrong. What have these poor people done? You should punish me and my family."

### **David Builds an Altar**

2Sa 24:18 That same day Gad went to David and said to him, "Go up to Araunah's threshing place and build an altar to the LORD."

2Sa 24:19 David obeyed the LORD's command and went as Gad had told him to.

2Sa 24:20 Araunah looked down and saw the king and his officials coming up to him. He threw himself on the ground

in front of David

2Sa 24:21 and asked, "Your Majesty, why are you here?" David answered, "To buy your threshing place and build an altar for the LORD, in order to stop the epidemic."

2Sa 24:22 "Take it, Your Majesty," Araunah said, "and offer to the LORD whatever you wish. Here are these oxen to burn as an offering on the altar; here are their yokes and the threshing boards to use as fuel."

2Sa 24:23 Araunah gave it all to the king and said to him, "May the LORD your God accept your offering."

2Sa 24:24 But the king answered, "No, I will pay you for it. I will not offer to the LORD my God sacrifices that have cost me nothing." And he bought the threshing place and the oxen for fifty pieces of silver.

2Sa 24:25 Then he built an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. The LORD answered his prayer, and the epidemic in Israel was stopped.

## **2 Samuel 24:1-25**

### **2 Samuel 24 - David and the Census**

#### **A. David commands a census to be taken.**

*1. (1-2) David is moved to take a census.*

**Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." So the king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people, that I may know the number of the people."**

a. **The anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David:** The translators of the New King James Version believe that "**He**" in this sentence applies to God, because they capitalize it. Yet

1Ch 21:1 tells us, *Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.* The best explanation is that Satan prompted King David and is the “he” of 2Sa 24:1. Yet the LORD expressly allowed it as a chastisement against David.

i. “Now the ‘he’ there, we assume would be the Lord. But as we find out in 1 Chronicles, chapter one, it was Satan that moved David’s heart, to the numbering of the people. So God opened the door, and allowed Satan to move in and tempt David.” (Smith)

b. **Go, number Israel and Judah:** This was dangerous because of a principle stated in Exo 30:12 : *When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.*

i. The principle of Exo 30:12 speaks to *God’s ownership of His people*. In the thinking of these ancient cultures, a man only had the right to count or number what belonged to him. Israel didn’t belong to David; Israel belonged to God. It was up to the LORD to command a counting, and if David counted he should only do it at God’s command and receiving ransom money to “atone” for the counting.

2. (3-4) *Joab objects to the census.*

**And Joab said to the king, “Now may the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times more than there are, and may the eyes of my lord the king see *it*. But why does my lord the king desire this thing?” Nevertheless the king’s word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army. Therefore Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel.**



a. **Why does my lord the king desire this thing:** Joab wasn't afraid to speak to David when he thought the king was wrong. With the best interest of both David and Israel in mind, Joab tactfully asked David to reconsider this foolish desire to count the nation.

i. Joab also hinted at the *motive* behind the counting - pride in David. The **this thing** that David desired was the increase of the nation, and he perhaps wanted to measure the size of his army to know if he had enough force to conquer a neighboring nation. "He did it out of curiosity and creature-confidence." (Trapp)

ii. So late in his reign, David was tempted to take some of the glory in himself. He looked at how Israel had grown and prospered during his reign - it was remarkable indeed. The count was a way to take credit to himself. "The spirit of vainglory in numbers had taken possession of the people and the king, and there was a tendency to trust in numbers and forget God." (Morgan)

b. **Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army:** It wasn't only Joab who tried to tell David not to do this - the **captains of the army** also warned David not to count the soldiers in Israel. But David did so anyway.

3. (5-9) *The census is taken.*

**And they crossed over the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the right side of the town which *is* in the midst of the ravine of Gad, and toward Jazer. Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; they came to Dan Jaan and around to Sidon; and they came to the stronghold of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Then they went out to South Judah *as far as* Beersheba. So when they had**

**gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.**

a. **When they had gone through all the land:** It took almost 10 months to complete the census. David should have called off this foolish census during the 10 months, but he didn't.

b. **Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king:** The results showed that there were 1,300,000 fighting men among the twelve tribes, reflecting an estimated total population of about 6 million in Israel.

i. "In the parallel place, 1Ch 21:5, the sums are widely different: in Israel *one million one hundred thousand*, in Judah *four hundred and seventy thousand*. Neither of these sums is too great, but they cannot be both correct; and which is the true number is difficult to say." (Clarke)

ii. "To attempt to reconcile them in every part is lost labour; better at once acknowledge what cannot be successfully denied, that although the original writers of the Old Testament wrote under the influence of the Divine Spirit, yet we are not told that the same influence descended on all *copiers* of their words, so as absolutely to prevent them from making mistakes." (Clarke)

## **B. David's guilt and God's punishment.**

1. (10) *David knows that he has done wrong in numbering the people.*

**And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."**

a. **David's heart condemned him:** The man after God's heart was not sinless, but he had a heart sensitive to sin when it was committed. David kept a short account with God.

b. **Take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly:** David now saw the pride and vainglory that prompted him to do such a foolish thing.

2. (11-13) *David is allowed to choose his judgment.*

**Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, "Go and tell David, 'Thus says the LORD: I offer you three *things*; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do *it* to you.'" So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me."**

a. **I offer you three things:** God used David's sin and the resulting chastisement to reveal David's heart and wisdom. His choice of the following three options were to test David:

- **Seven years of famine:** This would surely be the death of some in Israel, but the wealthy and resourceful would survive. Israel would have to depend on neighboring nations for food.

- **Flee three months before your enemies:** This would be the death of some in Israel, but mostly only of soldiers. Israel would have to contend with **enemies** among neighboring nations.

- **Three days' plague in your land:** This would be the death of some in Israel, but *anyone* could be struck by this plague - rich or poor, influential or anonymous, royalty or common.

- b. **Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me:** God wanted David to use the prophet as a mediator, and to answer to the prophet instead of directly to God.

3. (14) *David chooses the three days of plague.*

**And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man."**

- a. **Please let me fall into the hand of the LORD:** This meant that David chose the three days of plague. In the other two options the king and his family could be insulated against the danger, but David knew that he had to expose *himself* to the chastisement of God.

- i. "Had he chosen *war*, his own *personal safety* was in no danger, because there was already an ordinance preventing him from going to battle. Had he chosen *famine*, his own wealth would have secured his and his own family's support. But he showed the greatness of his mind in choosing the *pestilence*, to the ravages of which himself and his household were exposed equally with the meanest of his subjects." (Clarke)

- b. **Do not let me fall into the hand of man:** This meant that David chose the three days of plague. In the

other two options, Israel would either be at the mercy of neighbors (as in the famine) or attacked by enemies. David knew that God was far more merciful and gracious than man.

*4. (15-17) The plague of destruction hits Israel severely.*

**So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, "Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house."**

a. **Seventy thousand men of the people died:** This was a great calamity upon Israel - a devastating plague striking so many in such a short period of time.

b. **The LORD relented from the destruction:** This justified David's wisdom in leaving himself in God's hands. He could not trust man to relent from destruction.

c. **Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house:** Like a true shepherd, David asked that the punishment be upon him and his own household. Having another purpose to accomplish, God did not accept David's offer.

**C. David builds an altar.**

*1. (18-21) David is instructed to erect an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah.*

**And Gad came that day to David and said to him, “Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground. Then Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” And David said, “To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people.”**

**a. Erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite:** This is where David met the Angel of the LORD, and where God relented from the plague before it came upon Jerusalem. Now God wanted David to meet Him there in worship.

i. “Threshing floors were usually on a height, in order to catch every breeze; some area to the north of David’s city is indicated.” (Baldwin)

ii. The **threshing floor of Araunah** had both a rich history and a rich future. 2Ch 3:1 tells us that the threshing floor of Araunah was on Mount Moriah; the same hill where Abraham offered Isaac (Gen 22:2), and the same set of hills where Jesus died on the cross (Gen 22:14).

**b. To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD:** David wanted to transform this place where chaff was separated from wheat into a place of sacrifice and worship. It would remain a place of sacrifice and worship because this land purchased by David became the site of Solomon’s temple (1Ch 21:28 to 1Ch 22:5).

*2. (22-24) Refusing the gift of Araunah, David buys the threshing floor.*

**Now Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever *seems* good to him. Look, *here are* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you." Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.**

**a. Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him:** Araunah had a good, generous heart and wanted to *give* David anything he wanted.

i. "Had Araunah's noble offer been accepted, it would have been *Araunah's sacrifice*, not *David's*; nor would it have answered the end of turning away the displeasure of the Most High." (Clarke)

**b. I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing:** David knew that it would not be a *gift* nor a *sacrifice* unto the LORD if it did not cost him something. He didn't look for the cheapest way possible to please God.

i. "He who has a religion that *costs him nothing*, has a religion that is *worth nothing*: nor will any man esteem the ordinances of God, if those ordinances cost him nothing." (Clarke)

ii. "Where there is true, strong love to Jesus, it will cost us something. Love is the costliest of all undertakings... But what shall we mind if we gain Christ? You cannot give up for Him without regaining everything you have renounced, but purified and transfigured." (Meyer)

3. (25) *David's altar and sacrifice.*

**And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.**

**a. And offered burnt offerings and peace offerings:**

This shows that David understood that the death of the 70,000 in Israel in the plague did not *atone* for his and Israel's sin. Atonement could only be made through the blood of an approved substitute.

i. **Burnt offerings** were to atone for sin; **peace offerings** were to enjoy fellowship with God. This shows us from the beginning to the end, David's life was marked by fellowship with God.

ii. "We finally see the man after God's own heart turning the occasion of his sin and its punishment into an occasion of worship." (Morgan)

**b. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land:**

1Ch 21:26 tells us that God showed His acceptance of David's sacrifice by consuming it with fire from heaven. God honored David's desire to be right and to fellowship with God by answering with Divine blessing from heaven. So it always is when God's children draw near to their God and Father for cleansing and fellowship.